

The Shaping
of Art &
Architecture
in
Nineteenth-
Century
America

**THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART**

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Art and Architecture
in
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America**

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The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Foreword

In conjunction with its centennial exhibitions "Nineteenth-Century America" and "The Rise of an American Architecture," the Metropolitan Museum was host in May 1970 to a four-day gathering of scholars, historians, critics, and collectors. This was the first formal exchange of ideas about nineteenth-century American art by such a group. Twenty years ago, these exhibitions, much less this symposium, could hardly have taken place. Unfashionable American paintings for years remained in the storerooms and basements of museums; many buildings and interiors of the nineteenth century were condemned to demolition or consigned to the rubbish heap. But we have finally become interested in our heritage and concerned enough to hold a meeting such as this one. We hope the ideas generated here helped to give impetus to the movement to preserve what is left of nineteenth-century America.

The eleven papers in this volume, the core of the symposium, throw new lights on our art and architecture. For example, the interaction between American and European art and architecture during the nineteenth century was reviewed and proved to be much more complicated than was thought before; and some new principles for art history, in which style was related to political, social, and philosophical movements, presented us with a particularly challenging problem. Perhaps ideas such as these will lead to more research, more knowledge, and ultimately acquaint more Americans with the charms of this enormously imaginative and lively period.

JOHN K. HOWAT

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Contents

Directions in the Study of American Painting JAMES THOMAS FLEXNER	11
Influences and Affinities: The Interplay between America and Europe in Landscape Painting before 1860 BARBARA NOVAK	27
American Neoclassic Sculpture WILLIAM H. GERDTS	42
Foreign Influences in American Painting and Architecture after 1860 HENRY-RUSSELL HITCHCOCK	56
Stylistic Interplay between Central Europe and America: Architecture and Painting from 1860 to 1914 R. J. CLARK	68
The Interplay between American and Japanese Art BENJAMIN ROWLAND, JR.	82
American Art and the Urban Fair ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN	94
How a Few Artists Wormed Their Way in the Course of a Century into the Confidence of a Small Percentage of Their Compatriots RUSSELL LYNES	104
The Nineteenth-Century Artist and His Posthumous Public STUART P. FELD	117
Design and Chaos: Some Heretical Conjectures about the Artist and the Public in America JOHN A. KOUWENHOVEN	137
Taste and Ideology: Principles for a New American Art History ALAN GOWANS	156

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Directions in the Study of American Painting

Although this has been billed as a keynote address, it cannot really be that. A keynote address tries, as it opens a political convention, to lay down a consensus. We, however, are *not* seeking unity. The object of this symposium is to foster the processes, sometimes heated, by which people learn from each other. I do not flatter myself that the ideas I shall now present will meet with universal or even general agreement. If they spark controversy, that may well contribute to this symposium the more.

Certainly, it is possible to open on a happy note. At this time, when after so many dark years our speciality has at very long last come into its own, we may be forgiven if we pat ourselves on our own backs. We have, as a group, much to be proud of. Yet let us remember what Benjamin West often said to a pupil: "You have done well. You have done very well. Now go away and do better."

Much as I like to think of myself as a dashing young man, I cannot hide the fact that my first book on American painting was published thirty-two years ago. If we assign three generations to a century, *America's Old Masters* appeared a generation ago. What a terrifying thought! I feel like Longfellow's *Skeleton in Armor*: "Speak, speak, thou fearful guest!"

The sponsors of this exhibition feel that its most original impact will not be in the field of painting, which is already coming into its own. They hope that the sections on decorative arts will create a wave of interest in an aspect of nineteenth-century American creativity that has been overlooked. I must confess that it has been overlooked by me. I hope to be educated during this symposium. In

JAMES THOMAS FLEXNER is author of many books on American painting and other aspects of American life. In 1970 he published *Nineteenth Century American Painting* and the third volume of his four-volume biography of George Washington.

the meanwhile, I shall deal primarily with a subject concerning which I have some knowledge: American painting.

May I, my fellow workers, congratulate you on being here at all! When the historiography of American art is written, this meeting will have an important place as being, whatever the results of our mutual education, in itself the demonstration of major developments. This is the largest, the most inclusive, and potentially the most important symposium on the history of American art ever held. More than three centuries after painting and decorative arts began moving in British America, Americans have become concerned enough to hold such a gathering as this!

Very significant are the place where we are meeting and the educational affiliations of many in this hall. Only a few years ago, it would have been inconceivable for a museum of the stature of the Metropolitan to pay the attention to American art it is paying with its nineteenth-century exhibition and this symposium. Most museums regarded early American painting as so vastly inferior to European art that it was only considered necessary to let a few canvases, which had not been cleaned or restored, languish yellowly in some dark corner. Trustees often refused to acquire for pittances pictures that their successors would be glad to buy today for large sums. Disdain for the American tradition in art was the correct sophisticated attitude.

It was not a personal aberration that made me, although I had studied Italian art and spent months at "I Tatti" with Bernard Berenson, publish on American painting without having taken a single course on the subject. Courses on the subject were not offered. The university art departments were even more scornful of the art of our nation than the museums, which *did* keep some pictures on display and *did* breed some of the most impressive experts.

After I had published *America's Old Masters*, I soon got to know just about everyone working in the field. They were few. As is so often the case in a neglected, underpopulated speciality, they were cranky and tended to hate one another. I remember having suggested way back in those dark ages that a society be organized of students of American painting, but I was warned that I would be suborning a murder. Indeed, such a meeting would have been a perfect setting for a detective story, since everyone had a motive. Today, I believe, we are less cranky.

Although Lloyd Goodrich had already published his important works on Eakins and Homer, in the 1930s the main scholarly attention was directed toward the first centuries of American portraiture. The interest had originally spilled over from the pre-Depression collecting fad for eighteenth-century English likenesses. Gilbert Stuart, whose style was defined as more English than it actually was, reigned the hero. Although he had dashed off his portraits of Washington at the rate of two every two hours – he called them his hundred dollar bills – to secure a "Stuart

Washington” was the most impressive coup for a collector. English eighteenth-century decorative arts having also been in vogue, American decorative arts of the same period, viewed in their most elegant and transatlantic manifestations, were being explored in the Metropolitan Museum’s American Wing and at the somewhat younger Williamsburg restoration.

Lawrence Park’s *Gilbert Stuart*, the first modern checklist to appear of any American painter, had been published in 1926. An excellent book on Copley’s American work by Barbara Neville Parker and Anne Bolling Wheeler followed twelve years later. Apart from the great names, the interest in our early painters was still largely genealogical. The possessors of likenesses of their ancestors wanted to know who had painted them. This was regarded as pure antiquarianism. The realization, born of modernistic taste, that crude-seeming portraits could have aesthetic quality was just beginning to seep in. Francis Taylor, once director of the Metropolitan, liked to say that he had rescued the portraits of John Freake and Mrs. Freake and Baby Mary, the great masterpieces of seventeenth-century American painting, on a street in Worcester, Massachusetts, as they waited among ash cans for the garbage collector. Since Taylor, one of the most amusing men alive, was never averse to improving a story, I have never decided whether this anecdote was factual or symbolic. In any case, the Worcester Art Museum published, under the leadership of Louisa Dresser, a catalogue of seventeenth-century New England painting that stood out as a lonely tower among the flimsy studies of our early art.

Research had been immensely complicated by a classic example of good intentions gone astray. Thomas B. Clarke, who had befriended Inness and Homer, decided to put knowledge of the beginnings of American painting on solid feet. He announced that he was in the market for early works, the authenticity of which was attested to by inscriptions on the pictures and by supporting documents. Key pictures for a whole squad of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century artists quickly appeared. Only after this trove had received much scholarly attention was it discovered that in many cases, the inscriptions and histories had been applied to provincial European pictures. The inscriptions had withstood chemical analysis because they had been put on the back with paint dissolved from the front. Mysterious operators had found in old legal records the limners’ names they signed, and they had examined the genealogies of old families for some authentic member whose descendants the genealogist had failed to trace. Into these gaps the mysterious operators hooked a line of imaginary descendants. In the name of the spurious last of these imaginary descendants they concocted an affidavit of authenticity stating that the picture had never been out of the family. Long after the sad facts had been ascertained, legal technicalities prevented their publication, which meant that writers too far from the centers to be reached by word of mouth

continued disastrously to base conclusions on the false as well as the true Clarke Collection pictures.

When sources were incomplete and scattered, when few illustrated publications existed and no real effort at synthesis had been made, our major resource was the Frick Art Reference Library. Here were several thousand unpublished photographs of early American paintings accompanied by summaries of what was known, or thought to be known, about the pictures. Since the genealogists who had done most of the research thus reported were better at reading documents than discriminating between styles, the archives of the Frick revealed prevailing confusion. To take one example, the compiler of the first checklist of many an early painter had a simple technique. He listed as the work of an artist every picture that he could discover had ever been attributed to that artist. I never made out whether it was unconsciousness of the fact or indifference to it that permitted him to list without comment the same picture as the work of several different painters.

Into this welter there had marched as a savior one of the most improbable figures you can imagine. William Sawitzky was a Russian ornithologist who had forgotten his birds to become fascinated with the beginnings of American art. The most self-demanding of scholars, he set a salutary example. However, he was too great a perfectionist to bring, before his death in 1947, much work to publication. It was left to me to publish, also in 1947, the first comprehensive history of American painting before the Revolution.

The spread of interest from Colonial and Federal portraiture to nineteenth-century painting was not so much due to the pursuit of new subjects for specialization as to an encyclopedic concern with defining the whole line of development in our art. Pioneering museums, particularly Brooklyn under the leadership of John I. H. Baur and Detroit under E. P. Richardson, started comprehensive collections; and various exhibitions were staged, one of the most important being "Life in America," which Hyatt Mayor organized at the Metropolitan Museum as far back as 1939. Three excellent general histories were published: by Oliver Larkin in 1949, by Virgil Barker in 1950, and by Richardson in 1956. I extended my own studies with a brief general history in 1950 and two further detailed volumes, one on the generations of West and Allston and the other on the painting of the high nineteenth century. An occasional good book or monograph appeared on some specific aspect of our nineteenth-century art that caught someone's attention. The most sensational of these labors was Alfred Frankenstein's *After the Hunt* (1953), in which, by discovering Peto, he split into two the work attributed to Harnett.

Our mid-nineteenth-century painting was first surveyed as a unit in two pioneering exhibitions. "Romantic Painting in America" was staged during 1943 at

the Museum of Modern Art by James T. Soby and Dorothy Miller. Next came "The Hudson River School," put together in 1945 by Frederick A. Sweet for the Chicago Art Institute and the Whitney.

By this time another character as unlikely as William Sawitzky had stepped on the scene. Maxim Karolik was, like Sawitzky — was it pure coincidence? — a Russian. He had been an opera singer. Having fled the Russian Revolution to the United States, he married a wealthy Boston blue blood and became fascinated by her background. In 1949, he donated to the Museum of Fine Arts his collection of American paintings from 1815 to 1865. Highly publicized and highly persuasive, accompanied by a masterly catalogue in which every picture was sumptuously reproduced, the Karolik Collection has had a great influence on the study of the period. In his published letter of gift, Mr. Karolik stated that his primary interest had been in discovering "unknown and the little-known" artists. His approach to his collection placed a spotlight on various painters hitherto undervalued or ignored, particularly two whom we today greatly admire, Martin Johnson Heade and Fitz Hugh Lane. The rediscovery of these artists was a major gain for our understanding of the American tradition. However, a misunderstanding also arose. Some scholars, ignoring the purpose of the collection, interpreted it as a representative survey of nineteenth-century American painting. They felt encouraged to downgrade men like Church, Kensett, and Gifford in whom Karolik had been uninterested, because they had in their own time been acknowledged leaders. If this unjustified prejudice lingers in some minds it will, I think, be exorcized by a careful examination of American nineteenth-century painting as a whole.

Even before the Karolik Collection began its impressive career, there appeared a movement in the colleges to teach American art. This was not due to any new interest in the paintings, but to the popularity of a major called American Studies. The programs were usually steered by the one faculty dealing with American creativity that had any standing, literature. But for the sake of completeness, some kind of course had to be given in the visual arts. The professors to whom this task was assigned commonly felt that they were being sent across the aesthetic railroad tracks into an artistic slum; and like old-fashioned social workers, they considered it their mission to uplift. Each set out to reconstruct the existing study of American art according to the methodology he had been in the habit of applying to whatever aspect of Old World art had been his actual speciality. How far such methodologies are actually applicable to American aesthetic developments remains a vexed problem.

I know from my own experience the tensions this question can raise on the level of institutional administration. When the universities were beginning to wonder about American painting, the dean of a major faculty of the fine arts asked me

whether I would be willing to give a course in American painting and to lead graduate students. I, being wedded to my typewriter, hesitated, and he went back to his faculty. They proved to be broad-minded. They were willing to overlook the fact that my education as a student of American art had not been conventional; they were willing to forget that American art was not an established discipline. But they did have one proviso. They would agree only if I would promise to teach American painting exactly according to the methodology that they applied to the study of European painting.

One can see their point of view. A doctorate is not awarded by a single professor but by an institution, and they practiced techniques of which they were justly proud. But I had to refuse because I believe that the study of American art presents its own problems, which must be dealt with in their own way.

We should not forget that one of the excitements felt by the Hudson River school landscapists was caused by their realization that they had an unhackneyed realm of nature to explore and express. Thomas Cole believed that the painter of American scenery had privileges superior to any other since all nature here was new to art. How fortunate we are to be able to share, in our own field of endeavor, the same pioneering excitement felt by the Hudson River school. Much of the painting it is our privilege to explore is new to art history. What a feast lies before us! From any position we care to take, we have only to look around us to see unexplored aesthetic peaks and glades. Our task thus requires more pioneering than is called for in the pursuit of established European art history. We cannot proceed along highly cultivated ground sustained by a host of able predecessors in whose footsteps we can walk. We must blaze our own trails.

When Worthington Whittredge returned from years of study in Düsseldorf and Italy, he concluded sadly that to try to paint American landscape altogether according to the techniques he had learned in Europe would result in blemishing distortion. To learn to paint American nature, he isolated himself for months in Catskill glades. Fellow scholars, we cannot study American art altogether in terms of the European! We, too, have a need for Catskill glades.

Two factors that have been determining in the United States have only partial parallels in any major European school. One is that to a much greater extent than was likely in Europe, American artists, including many of the very best, were self-taught. The other is the unique relationship that has existed between our native culture and the more sophisticated, and also different, parent culture overseas.

The results of this relationship – to what extent artists accepted, refused, or exerted influence – lie within the scope of the most conventional methodology. Yet hazards exist. There is the a priori assumption that if anything admirable appears in American art, it *must* have been due to direct European influence, an

assumption that has been used to justify some truly amazing bendings and stretchings of the most slender evidence. An almost opposite assumption also has its devotees. They believe that any manifest result of European influence on an American artist is such an unworthy betrayal by the artist of his native roots that his pictures must be by definition altogether derivative and bad. If the proponents of these two fallacies happen to get together, they can assassinate a reputation. This has to some extent been done in the case of George Inness. The Europeanophiles explain Inness as a slavish imitator of the Barbizon school. The eagle-screamers say, "In that case, to hell with him!" But of course, the Barbizon school was only one of many influences, native and foreign, that Inness mingled with his own vision and his own temperament to produce a great personal style.

To go beyond results and define the basic causes for relationships between American and European art, we must examine environmental matters not considered by the strict academic view as relevant to aesthetic studies. Beneath the reaction to Europe of every American painter lay the need of mediation between the society in which he was born — that way of life experienced in its totality — and civilizations abroad. This dilemma has been met in many different ways, yet in its essence it has remained constant from the beginnings of American art to today.

Profound differences between the American artist and the European are likely to begin as soon as a baby can waddle out-of-doors. The European baby enters an environment that often contains man-made objects of true beauty. At the very least, it contains objects that are old, and time is an excellent repainter, softening contours, meliorating colors. And always, the European is immersed in an atmosphere of tradition, of culture viewed as a quality that accretes down the years.

The American child is urged by his environment not to take tradition seriously. The world in which he finds himself is exciting, pulsing with change and growth, but new. The chances that he will find close to his home any man-made object of real beauty are small, and time has not yet started its process of toning down. If, as the American gets older, he is to see a monument of art, he must search it out, find it usually in a spot separated from his normal environment. He steps into a museum.

The European who wishes to be an artist is presented with established directions and institutions that give him a solid base to build on or react against. But usually the American must either accept exterior artistic conventions separated from the dynamism around him, or he must proceed from hand to mouth.

It is axiomatic that to be a great artist a man must express his deepest feelings. These deepest feelings are profoundly and inevitably shaped by the environment in which he was raised. If that environment does not offer cultural maturity, how is he to achieve it? By reaching out for flowers growing in another environment, he risks

ending up with a cut bouquet that quickly withers. But if he does not reach out, he risks ending up with crudeness. How and in what proportion is he to achieve a viable synthesis?

Down the years American painting has tended to swing between the poles. When our nineteenth century opened, the dominant school, which dated back to the time when America was actually a colonial possession of Europe, had managed to achieve, under the leadership of Benjamin West, a synthesis that functioned. The next generation — Allston, Morse, Vanderlyn — came home from Europe with elegant accomplishments that quickly gave way to sterility. Then there was a period when the painters, fearing too great European influence, sought to grow as exclusively as possible on American roots. As the second half of the century unrolled, the painting scene became complicated enough to contain several beaten paths. Homer and Ryder continued to eschew European techniques; Inness and Eakins found abroad techniques that they applied to home-grown conceptions; Chase and Duveneck dazzled American audiences with European tricks; J. Alden Weir and Twachtman moved slowly but in the end impressively toward French impressionism; Cassatt and Whistler flourished as expatriates.

Whatever may have been the taste of a generation ago, whatever it may be a generation hence, today opinion prefers among our nineteenth-century painters those who were the less eclectic. This gives a particular significance to the phenomenon of artistic invention.

Although there was once a time when it was believed that every mechanical or scientific invention had a single inventor, it is now generally recognized in the history of science that when the necessary ingredients are available in the general environment, a number of individuals, completely isolated from each other, will make the same creative combinations. That this phenomenon occurs also in art is not sufficiently recognized.

"Methodology" usually assumes that a similarity between aesthetic forms must result from some specific link that can be defined in aesthetic terms. Even in Europe, I suspect, parallel invention was more rife than is generally admitted. However, in modern Europe the possibility and necessity for such invention has been, because of the presence of strong traditions and close artistic contacts, less great than in the United States. Only too often an American painter could not, however hard he searched, find aesthetic sources adequate to help him achieve his ends. So he had to improvise. If he wished to show a man throwing an object, he might easily evolve a form that had been used by a Renaissance artist or ancient sculptor to express a man throwing an object. The body, after all, can engage in only a limited number of contortions, and when you have no pictures to look at, you are likely to look at the people around you. Gilbert Stuart pontificated that in

Europe pictures grew from other pictures, while in America they grew from life.

During the nineteenth-century, the major aesthetic sources available in this country were engravings and at a later date photographs. These contributed to resemblances between American and European conceptions, yet the contribution had to be limited. It is hardly necessary to point out that the translation of printed forms into oil paintings calls for much greater originality than do studies under a teacher or in a gallery of art.

As they develop their styles, all artists make choices among available alternatives. If artists have worked in cultural centers in an atmosphere of strong traditions, explanations for these choices may justifiably be sought in cultural terms. One can proceed along a methodological road, at least seemingly solid, paved with ideas gleaned from books, with the sights and associations of studios, and with memories of past art. But in the study of American painting, if one tries to follow that road any distance, it soon shrinks to a footpath and then vanishes in a tangle of wilderness trees and second growth.

There was no effective art school in the United States, let us remember, until the Art Students League was founded in the 1870s. The choices made by artists who began their labors before they went to Europe were commonly decided by two factors not primarily cultural: their individual personalities and the conceptions they derived from their total environment. Most significantly, the only coherent school developed in the United States during the nineteenth century, the Hudson River school, preached as doctrine the avoidance of cultural and artistic influences. A beginner, Asher B. Durand wrote in his "Letters on Landscape Painting" (*The Crayon*, 1855), should not worry about theory or look at the other men's pictures until he had developed a style of his own in personal contact with nature.

The fact that so many aspects of American art grew spontaneously from the interaction of personality and environment makes particularly unfortunate the fissure that sometimes threatens to divide the study of our aesthetic development between academic specialities. The art historian, rigidly avoiding what I am told is sometimes called "the sociological fallacy," writes about paintings as if they were miraculously conceived by disembodied cultural machines. The sociologist, not wishing to stray into the preserve of the art historian, heroically turns his back on all pictures while he writes about the climate of taste or the economics of selling. Such doctrinaire limitations of scope set writers on both sides of the divide to barking up the wrong trees.

Speaking of trees, their role in the iconography of American painting is another indication of peculiarity. To have read every work of literature that was available to Durand and looked at every picture he might have seen will not help us so much to explain the specific content of his landscapes as to have taken a course in forestry.

Durand was a farmboy painting for other farmboys. Henry T. Tuckerman tells us in his *Book of the Artists* (1867) that Durand could, in depicting "a group of forest trees standing in their individuality," leave out "the devices usually used to set off so exclusive a scene" because he made each tree so characteristic of its species "that the senses and the mind are filled and satisfied." Tuckerman urged the viewer to "mark the spreading boughs of that black birch, the gnarled trunk of that oak, the drooping sprays of the hemlock" and so on throughout a long panegyric.

A very valuable contribution of American Studies to the elucidation of American painting has been an emphasis on comparison among the various arts. This method has given us many stimulating insights, but within it lurk pitfalls. There has been a tendency, since chains of influence are often sought, to stress similarities to the extent of ignoring differences. And when similarities are found they are often defined, without further examination, as the result of direct cross-fertilization. The simultaneous invention, mentioned earlier, is often ignored.

Let us consider an often cited example. In his famous lecture "The American Scholar" Emerson supported intellectual concern among Americans with their own environment. How often we have read statements running something like this: "Following the lead given by Emerson's 'The American Scholar,' the Hudson River school painters depicted the American land."

This postulated order of events reflects the long-held primacy of the literature faculties in American Studies. A simple check of chronology reveals that Emerson delivered "The American Scholar" twelve years after Cole's native American landscapes set off a major artistic explosion. Furthermore, the Hudson River school aesthetic preached a much more exclusive concern with American experience than the Transcendentalists ever supported. Emerson and his followers felt no kinship for the Hudson River school. Emerson, as he wrote, found himself unresponsive to visual art until he went to Italy; Boston bought from Cole not views of the Catskills but views on the Arno; Boston remained the port of entry for European art; Winslow Homer fled the New England atmosphere to New York; Boston's favorite American painters were not Durand or Kensett or Church or Heade but Washington Allston, William Page, whom Boston considered "the American Titian," and that disciple of the Barbizon school, William Morris Hunt. When Hunt exhibited at the stronghold of the Hudson River school, the National Academy, his work was so hooted at that his attitude toward New York became that of the young lady to the Bowery: "They do such things and and they say such things! . . . I am not going there anymore."

The often marked resemblances of "The American Scholar" and indeed most Transcendentalist writings to the Hudson River school were not necessarily the result of direct cross-fertilization, since both movements reflected the same broad

environmental imperatives. American cultural independence was preached to all by historical fact. After the War of 1812, the United States had turned her back on Europe; our society was going its own way. We had no Metternich system, no Revolutions of 1830 and 1848; Europe had no herculean expansion across a continent.

Another link between the Transcendentalists and the painters was the general acceptance of an optimistic pantheism well suited to the happy, prosperous, and rural situation of the United States before the tragedy of the Civil War and the subsequent rise of industrialism. Emerson clothed this pantheism in great prose and brilliant intellectual reasoning, but it was also sounded by illiterate preachers baptizing yokels by total immersion in streams of which the New England philosopher had never heard.

The different arts and sometimes various schools within the same art tended to reflect different aspects of American life. The Transcendentalists were intellectual; the Hudson River school was nonintellectual. Emerson saw painting as a step in the ladder to a philosophical understanding of Nature. Once you had climbed high enough into the intellect, you needed this imperfect visual approach no longer. For their part, the painters were much less concerned with ideas than the emotions raised through the senses by the facts of Nature. They did not sit in libraries, but climbed mountains. They were almost without exception not formally educated. And their public shared their conceptions. Indeed, a basic aspect of the Hudson River school revolution was a shift in patronage from educated gentlemen to self-made merchants, who had not been students but farmhands and clerks in country stores.

In thus discussing Emerson and the Transcendentalists, I have, of course, referred to only one aspect of nineteenth-century literature among many. Literature was the most protean of the American arts. Just to mention a few names — Bryant, Poe, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Howells, Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Henry James — is to call to mind innumerable possible comparisons — resemblances and differences — with American paintings. But this is too large a subject to be pursued here.

Nor can I, in discussing the relationships between painting and architecture, do more than pursue briefly the theme I have set myself of differences between the arts. A man who is securing a building engages in a much more public and generalized social act than when he is securing a painting. Partly because a house is so expensive, partly because a building protrudes as a conspicuous symbol visible to the whole community — friend and foe alike — partly because public buildings are cooperative ventures and private ones are entangled with the ancient mystique of the hearth, there is a greater pressure toward conservatism on architecture than on any of the other arts. During our nineteenth century, conservatism (in art as well as

life) looked to Europe, was derivative, eclectic, cosmopolitan. Thus American architecture became enamored of foreign labels. While our most original painters tried to deny what European instruction and influence showed in their work, our most original architects enclosed their spaces in shells that carried such names as Greek revival, Gothic, or Romanesque. Even the wild, vernacular exuberance of the shingle style masqueraded under the pseudonym of Queen Anne – what would that royal lady have thought of the didos cut, for better or worse, by this clearly nineteenth-century style?

As far as promulgated theory and active cooperation went, architecture and painting traveled hand in hand only when painting was in fact at its most eclectic. It was toward the end of the century that the architects persuaded the super rich that they should, like Renaissance princes, embellish their churches and homes with painted decorations. This movement left the painters we now consider the strongest to one side. Can you imagine Thomas Eakins making an embellishment for the Vanderbilts at “The Breakers”?

Comparisons between architecture and painting exemplify the divergences created between the various arts by different types and levels of intervention through technology. Technology – the balloon frame, cast-iron fronts, the elevator, steel framing, and so forth – sprang up in the very center of architectural practice, like Jack’s beanstalk rising explosively to tower over an ancient grove. In painting, technological inventions altered actual physical practice only by minor variations in long-established methods; colors created by chemistry, metal tubes that simplified carrying oil paints from the studio into the landscape. Technology’s main influence on painting can be compared to the appearance of a new planet, which, without actually colliding with its predecessor, shifts, by gravitations and repulsions, surfaces on the old planet. I speak, of course, of the influence on painting of an alternate means of recording images: the camera.

In the mid-century, painting cooperated with the decorative arts in the sense that pictures by leading painters were, to an extent not unique but very unusual in the history of art, created not to hang in churches or aristocratic halls or museums or mansions or tax-exempt collections, but in the living quarters of the ordinarily prosperous. In this phase, which was the phase of the Hudson River school, painting was at its most aggressively concerned with native subject matter and home-grown technique. However, the furniture over which the pictures hung responded to almost opposite pressures. In his most informative catalogue of the Metropolitan’s exhibition “Nineteenth-Century America,” Berry Tracy writes: “The period of the late forties to the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 was particularly characterized by the emergence of a range of styles, labeled variously as Grecian, modern, Gothic, rococo, Elizabethan, Louis XIV, Louis XV, Renaissance, Louis XVI, and ‘neo grec.’ ”

Throughout the nineteenth century, the decorative arts echoed and even magni-

fied the eclecticism of architecture. It was by no means considered essential to stick to one style in one piece of furniture. The nineteenth-century artifacts could, indeed, be said to resemble collages, in which seemingly disparate elements are combined in ways that would have amazed their original designers. The results could be exciting original creations, yet it is hard to find close parallels for this approach among important painters. The eclecticism of such a late nineteenth-century artist as Chase was different, partly because Chase avoided any conspicuous mixture of styles in a single picture, partly because *his* eclecticism concerned itself primarily with contemporary European sources. He did not go back to the ancients or the Middle Ages or even the old masters, unless we include in that category Velázquez and Hals. One of the few important painters who was eclectic in the manner of the furniture makers was John La Farge. Perhaps it was no coincidence that La Farge was — I refer to his stained glass — the only important painter to play an active role in the decorative arts.

The course of sculpture was greatly influenced by two factors, neither of which had any reference to painting. One of these factors seems today reasonable, the other wild. The rational consideration was that the availability of marble and of craftsmen skilled at shaping stone induced the majority of the American sculptors to work, even if for sale to their compatriots, in Italy. The wild factor descended from the vagaries of sexual taboo.

The physical female body was never more covered up and thus never more a subject of interest. Painting could deal with the nude only charily because of its verisimilitude of color and texture. But naked sculpture had the auspices of the ancients; the color of marble suggested but did not duplicate flesh; textures could be kept hard (indeed to do anything else was beyond the skill of most sculptors); and iconographical tricks were developed to bring in respectability. If, for instance, a sculptured naked lady were chained, as in Powers's *Greek Slave*, this made her — whatever other ideas we might have today — an elevating rather than a degrading symbol. Her shackles demonstrated, so the nineteenth century rationalized, that she was not a hussy engaged in exhibitionism but a pure woman forced to exposure against her will. The monopoly the sculptors enjoyed of subject matter so seductive to themselves and so salable contributed perhaps more than any aesthetic consideration to giving to partially or completely unclothed females primacy as sculptural figure subjects well into the twentieth century.

As I get toward the end of this discussion, the time has surely come to take up the question, so relevant to contemporary times, of relevance. To phrase it another way: how far are dead men to be indulged by forgiving them for living in their own time, not ours? This matter has two facets: one aesthetic, the other environmental.

Writers sometimes insist that in our judgements of past art we should apply what

they call modern insights. I will confess that, after all I have lived through, I am still flabbergasted that some men familiar with art history can apply to aesthetic evolution the conception of progress. They should have observed that in art what follows is by no means necessarily better than what went before. They should know that the only constant is change: the position any generation occupies will be soon deserted. Yet there is no lack of presumably rational and educated human beings who feel that the movement of taste has come to a halt in their own times and, more specifically, in themselves. If a painter of the past does not fall in with their preconceptions, the worse for him!

Far more pervasive is the issue as to whether an artist of another era has the right to have had social ideas different from those we have today. To be relevant and thus worthy of attention, an artist, so it is copiously argued, must have done not *his* thing but *our* thing. Take, for instance, the matter of being a gentleman. Throughout the nineteenth century, you could hardly have insulted an artist more than by accusing him of not being a gentleman. Today many an artist, if you called him a gentleman, would feel an urge to punch you in the nose. Does this mean that the past artists were snobs whom we must, from our exalted social consciousness, despise?

These seem vexed matters, and they are at the moment throwing up much spray. But perhaps if viewed rationally the solution lies obviously at hand. The need is, of course, for the present to achieve as much pleasure, inspiration, and understanding as possible from the achievements of the past. What is involved is a mediation between two points of view; both must be represented at the conference table. The present is automatically there in the form of the critic who, however much he may reach out in a desire for sympathetic understanding, is still rooted in his own times. The past is there in the integrity of the object being examined. Let the two parties by all means get together as wholeheartedly and as intimately as it is possible for them to do. The result will of necessity be contemporary because of the age in which the critic lives. But it will not be so superficial and one-sided as if the critic beats on the conference table, berating the poor nineteenth-century artifact for not being up to the present date, for not being relevant.

Relevance, indeed, often sneaks in the back door while social consciousness calls for it vainly from the front. It is easy to attack the nineteenth-century painters for being escapist, unconcerned with modern social issues. But why, if these pictures are so abysmally irrelevant, is a sudden rampant concern with them one of the major developments of contemporary American taste? Perhaps we can find an answer in the fact that those critics who most vigorously attack nineteenth-century American painting are also those who most self-enchantedly cast themselves as members of a cultural elite. They view with alarm what they consider a wave of

popularism that dares to presume that a man who was not especially educated in taste could have authentic aesthetic insight. But such popularism is an important aspect of contemporary thought. And the central line of artistic achievement that moved from Thomas Cole through Winslow Homer was popularist in inspiration and patronage. It was launched in the teeth of an angry elite, won for a while almost universal acceptance in the United States, and gradually faded away under the sneers of a new self-appointed elite.

Ever since I was honored by the invitation to open this symposium, I have pondered on what should be my *envoi*, a statement to end with, like the moral of an old fable. I felt required to try to work into a single sentence my most fundamental beliefs concerning the study of American art. I finally reached this phrase: *Let no arbitrarily imposed limitations block our search for understanding.*

But no sooner had I set the phrase down than I realized that it required expansion; and it occurred to me that we are too impressed with ancient sphinxes and soothsayers for their ability to produce cryptic sentences capable of many interpretations. Almost any statement that is very brief can carry various meanings.

In suggesting that in our search for understanding we should transcend arbitrarily imposed limitations, I have not forgotten that every individual study must seek a finite objective. My meaning is that, whatever methods we establish to assist us in reaching specific ends, we should remember that our techniques were established for methodological reasons and need not constitute the only road to truth.

Such a study as we are undertaking resembles a great watershed in which all the components are interrelated and important. Investigation starts with rills that flow between narrow banks, bubbling past flat fields or rushing down declivities. But the forward current would be stopped if the rill did not flow into a stream — the banks now more distant — and then into a river. Augmented as it advances by a continual influx of more streams, each fed by its own ganglia of rills, the river joins with other rivers until a swelling flood flows majestically into an ocean that is also refreshed by still more waterways. Any mariner who ventures out on that ocean should realize that he is sustained by the waters from the inland rills; and any navigator of a river, however beautiful the prospect that he sees around him, must be considered provincial if he insists that no responsible historian will frequent seas where the limitation is a lack of obvious boundaries, where the shores may be out of sight, and he must, to reach the finite harbor he seeks, sometimes take his reckonings from the stars.

Each of us may well navigate at different times in different types of vessels on various waterways. Even if some prefer to remain more specialized, let us *all* respect the courses sailed by others if they are well and truly sailed.

Our labor is a united one to which all limitations must be means, not ends. The

other day I heard Father Robert I. Gannon, the retired president of Fordham University, ask: "What has happened to the humanists?" I trust that, if he were in attendance here, he would find many of them present, men and women who realize that art is only secondarily a subject for study, primarily one of the glories and joys of life.

Archibald MacLeish stated in an address to the Century Association: "The true definition of a civilized society, whether primitive or technologically advanced, is a society which understands the place of the arts: which knows that the arts are not decorations at the fringes of life, or objects collected in museums or exhibited in theatres or concert halls or published in books, but activities essential to humanity because it is through the arts and only through the arts that what is human in humanity can be conceived."

Influences and Affinities:

The Interplay between America and Europe in Landscape Painting before 1860

The period from about 1800 to about 1860 was a critical one in the development of American landscape painting. During this time national self-awareness and pride in landscape were at their height, and some of the most important American contributions to the history of Western landscape painting were made. It is a period generally considered to have been more artistically indigenous, when European influence was ostensibly at its lowest ebb. Yet, artists' trips to Europe were common, and contacts with European artists and art, with the great collections abroad, as well as with European exhibitions here certainly had their effect.

In estimating this effect, we must not exclude consideration of the influence of nature itself, of empirical observation. We have to recognize, too, that important influences came from other sources, among these, philosophical attitudes toward nature. We must, then, attempt judiciously to estimate these influences and achieve some sort of balance between them.

The problem is complicated by a temporal matter. In Europe the American artist was exposed simultaneously to the art of the present and of the past. For the American landscapist at the moment of his first experience of European art, present and past may have been telescoped into one. Thus through this telescoping of influences, the art of the seventeenth century, so important for an understanding of the art of the nineteenth, becomes through its potential for adaptation oddly contemporary.

We have, therefore, a complicated problem, compounded of artistic influences and of nature itself, stretching across geographical and national barriers, and break-

ing time barriers as well. In the study of the origins of any art, this is often true. But in America it would seem to be acutely relevant, since each of these influences, by virtue of America's distance from Europe, seems sharply defined. In approaching this problem, composed as it is of philosophical as well as visual solutions to the problems of painting nature, we must take into account not only influence, but an idea to which, it seems to me, we should increasingly devote our comparative studies — affinity.

Webster's defines influence as "the power of persons or things to affect others, seen only in its effects." Affinity is defined as "a similarity of structure, as of species or languages, implying common origin." On the one hand, we have cause and effect; on the other, similarity of structure with the suggestion of a common root. Obviously the distinctions between these two terms or circumstances are not nearly as clear cut as we are often led to believe. What we sometimes term affinity turns out, after additional research, to be influence. But to extend the consideration of interplay between America and Europe beyond influence to affinity would seem to join America even more firmly with Europe, as part of the Western world. American artists held some attitudes that shared common philosophical and artistic roots with those of their European contemporaries; while other attitudes stemmed more directly from American soil and from the pragmatic encounter with the *look* of the American landscape.

The earliest nineteenth-century awareness of nature was largely expressed in terms of other pictures, quite literally, in terms of the picturesque. Such paintings created the visual justification for Richard Payne Knight's observations in 1805, in his *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*: "Persons, being in the habit of viewing, and receiving pleasure from fine pictures, will naturally feel pleasure in viewing those objects in nature, which have called forth those powers of imitation The objects recall to the mind the imitations, . . . and these again recall to the mind the objects themselves, and show them through an improved medium — that of the feeling and discernment of a great artist."

John Neal had recognized the early taste for the picturesque in America, when he wrote in 1829 that in landscape painting, the public preferred poetry to prose. The picturesque was, of course, an eighteenth-century heritage that had at its base such seventeenth-century works as Claude Lorrain's *Landscape with Mill* (figure 1). Claude was a major force in nineteenth-century America, as he had been in eighteenth-century England. It is extraordinary how pervasive his influence was, not only in art, but in setting critical expectations. The critic Shearjashub Spooner complimented Cole, in his *Biographical and Critical Dictionary of Painters, Engravers, Sculptors and Architects* (1853), for copying nature closely in such paintings as *Pic-Nic* (figure 2): "His morning, evening and noon-day scenery, may be

compared to that of Claude Lorrain, more subdued but more true, and his storm scenes to those of Salvator Rosa Whatever scene he painted, it was nature herself."

Though Salvator, too, was an important artistic predecessor for Cole, he did not have Claude's pervasive impact on American landscape painting. The close relationship between Claude and Cole in mood – the pastoral, elegiac tone – and in composition – the dark coulisse of the foreground, the middleground scoop of water, the distant mountain, the soft trees framing the lateral edges – are quite evident in this comparison. We can trace the Claudian influence into other paintings by Cole, for example his *Dream of Arcadia*, and into such works as Asher B. Durand's *Babbling Brook*. Spooner's confusion of nature and art occurred as late as 1853. At that late date, the vestiges of what might be termed the Claudian-derived compositional formula were still to be found in what I have called the salon pictures of the Hudson River school. Although by this time, the formula had often become a cliché, some fine paintings were produced within the limitations of this convention. What might be said about all of them, without the necessity for value judgements, is that they were surely the most formal paintings of the Hudson River group. They aspired most obviously to an ideal art that fit into some a priori expectation of a noble style – a sort of landscape variation of the grand style, satisfying some of the lingering ambitions of the earlier frustrated history painters.

Beyond the problem of compositional structure, surely there was something about Claude's light that answered a need for an idealized and reverent light for a group of artists who had found their religion in nature. Cole, on his first trip to Europe, made some observations on pictures in the National Gallery in London on July 29, 1829, and noted of no. 14, Claude's *Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, which along with Turner's work might have inspired Cole's painting of *Consummation in Course of Empire*: "The best Claude I have ever seen. The sky and distance of a pearly cool tone may light and assist – the other parts of the picture darker – The clouds are light and beautiful and seem as though they were not painted with brushes but melted into the blue There are very broad masses of shadow in the picture but all transparent and gradating into the light beautifully – The water in the foreground is exquisitely painted and looks like the purest of water. His touch throughout is mellow melting and appropriate." He goes on to say: "The sky and distance are smooth as though they had been pummiced – though here and there you may see where the painter has used his hand."

On his second European trip in 1841, Cole noted in his diary after another visit to the National Gallery (August 24): "The Claudes are still pleasing but *Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* is my favourite – the beauty of the atmosphere, the truth, transparency and motion of the water are surprising."

Durand, on the other hand, had mixed feelings about Claude, as might be expected from an artist who could produce not only Claudian-derived compositions as his *Thanatopsis*, but some of the most pragmatic examples of realism in American landscape painting. In London on June 22, 1840, he wrote in his journal: "I may now say more emphatically I have seen the Old Masters, several of them undoubtedly fine specimens . . . and first and foremost in my thought is Claude . . . There are 10 of his works in this collection, some of them esteemed his very best, I may therefore venture to express my first impressions of Claude — On the whole then, if not disappointed, at the least, I must say he does not surpass my expectations . . . I will not express an opinion in detail until further examination, yet what I have seen of them is worth the passage of the Atlantic."

On July 3 Durand came home from the National Gallery "resolved to commence a landscape in Oil," and started one "as an attempt at some of the principles presented in the Pictures of Claude." Durand then traveled to Italy via Switzerland, Holland, Germany, and Belgium, and when he arrived in Florence, he wrote to Cole: "It may be hopeless to expect more perfect light and atmosphere than we find in the seaports and, occasionally, other scenes by Claude. Still, I have not felt in contemplating them that I was so completely in the presence of Nature, so absorbed by her loveliness and majesty, as not to feel that the portrait of her might be at least, in some important feature, more expressive of character."

En route to Italy Durand had done a lot of sketching, and he wrote to his wife from Geneva: "I have found an agreeable change from the previous study of pictures, to the study of nature, and nature too, in her utmost grandeur, beauty and magnificence."

Durand then, like Cole, admired and studied Claude, but he had a defined awareness of nature's presence that challenged the authority of pictures and made him question the necessity for reliance on them. This questioning was of utmost importance for the original contributions of the American landscape painters. For it implied a recourse to that direct contact with nature which offered them the possibility of creating an alternative landscape tradition. Thus, I feel, we have to conceive of the American landscape tradition as being comprised of several threads that sometimes ran parallel to one another. I am dealing here only with two of the more important ones. The one, a continuation of the Claudian-derived mode, fulfilled the official taste's ideal expectations, which were couched in the most readily assimilable and recognizable terms, those of the long-standing picturesque — a household word by the mid-nineteenth century. The other, a convention that occurred perhaps even more frequently, involved the deliberate abandonment of all the overtones of the picturesque, as in John F. Kensett's *Third Beach*, Newport, and Martin Johnson Heade's *Rocks* in New England. This convention occurred not

only in the works of Hudson River men such as Kensett and luminists such as Heade, but in the works of countless other American artists who have thus far managed to evade art historical labels.

Yet, although this mode seems to derive pragmatically, from the artist looking at nature rather than at pictures, although it has none of the noble connotations and ambitions of the Claudian-derived mode, it, too, may result from the example of pictures. It is possible that some of our painters finally learned to paint prose rather than poetry by looking at *prose* painters looking at nature. Quite distinct from the example of the picturesque, they may have painted their more direct experiences of nature by learning how to be direct from the conventions of another group of artists. Nature now is not so much seen through pictures, with all those referrals back and forth suggested by Richard Payne Knight, but pictures instruct how to see nature for itself.

In calling this landscape prose landscape, in John Neal's terms, I do not at all mean that there is no poetry in it. Quite the contrary. The poetry is an implied extension of the prose. The distinction here probably hinges on the degree of artificiality present in the earlier poetry. This is not artful poetry imposed on nature, but nature whose poetry has been delicately floated to the surface.

The taste for this poetic-prose landscape was perhaps not as popular with officialdom as it was with the artists themselves, or with private individuals who do not yet seem, from present research, to have been very vocal about their tastes. But it corresponded with a shift, around 1850, from the noble and poetic ideal of nature, to a realism, which, still imbued with ideal undertones, had quieter ambitions, and seemed to give nature itself more say in the dialogue between nature and art that determined the course of landscape painting.

The artists who offered the new route were the seventeenth-century Dutch artists who had been judged inferior by Sir Joshua Reynolds and devalued to a large extent by American critics in the same tone. Yet, James Jackson Jarves, the mid-century critic who most clearly shared Sir Joshua's concern with the ideal, was forced to observe, in *Art Thoughts* (1869): "Dutch art is too well-liked and known for me to dwell longer on it. Those whose aesthetics are in sympathy with its mental mediocrity will not desert it for anything I may say."

The taste for Dutch landscape in America has been largely lost to history. We know that Dutch paintings were included in private collections such as those of Robert Gilmor, Jr., Michael Paff, Thomas J. Bryan, and in public exhibitions at the American Academy of Fine Arts, the Apollo Gallery, the American Art-Union, and the Boston Athenaeum. The Gilmor collection alone included paintings by Van de Velde, Van der Neer, Van Goyen, and Cuyp, all of whom offered prototypes for American marine landscapes. The unframed lateral edges and the contained hori-

zontal structures fortified by straight horizons that distinguish so many landscape compositions in America — on land, and on sea, so to speak, as Kensett's Shrewsbury River, New Jersey, and Lane's Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine — find parallels in the quiet compositions of the Dutch. This can be seen in a comparison of a drawing by Cuyp, *River Landscape* (figure 3), with Lane's *Entrance from Southwest Harbor, Mount Desert* (figure 4). Even were the Cuyp a painting, we would find that American form is often more solid, as here, the light itself more concrete, the surface harder, less melting and painterly. Further comparison of Dutch and American works would show that American skies often tend to be narrower, the proportional axis more horizontal. American clouds tend to be less prominent, when they exist at all.

But for all these distinctions, the structural prototype that stands in such total opposition to the Claudian "frame" finds one of its most obvious parallels in Holland. This structure may stem in some way from the simple elimination of the Claudian mode and an empirical recourse to the actual natural experience, and, too, I suspect, from a pragmatic, even primitive freshness in the approach to picture making. But we have to consider also that it may have been connected to the direct influence of Dutch art. At the least we would be obliged to say that in following the example of the Dutch in returning to nature, Americans discovered similar pictorial modes.

Actually, if, at this point in the development of American landscape painting, Americans admired the Dutch, they were not very different from many of their European counterparts. There was also widespread admiration for the Dutch in the two areas with which American landscape painting would seem to find its closest affinities, in Germany and in Scandinavia. Thus, the question of affinity arises very naturally here, mixed as it is with the problem of influence.

The Claudian mode may have been transmitted in part through England, the country to which we looked most naturally for example in the early years of our landscape painting, and from which we had received some of the more important artists we claim as American — Cole, for example, and Robert Salmon.

The Dutch awareness also might have made its way here through the marine school founded in England by Willem van de Velde the Younger. The tradition was carried on in England in the works of such artists as Charles Brooking and Peter Monamy. It could then have been transferred here by the example of artists like Salmon, who worked in Boston between about 1828 and 1842, and whose works were known to Lane. In addition, we cannot overlook the possibility of direct contact with the Dutch on the part of luminists such as Lane.

One can compile a very substantial list of Dutch artists whose works were shown at the Boston Athenaeum during the years from about 1832 to 1848 when Lane

was in Boston. The list would include such names as Jan van de Cappelle, Albert Cuyp, Jan van Goyen, Meindert Hobbema, Paul Potter, Jacob van Ruysdael, who was shown very extensively, Salomon van Ruysdael, and Willem van de Velde. Lane himself showed at the Athenaeum intermittently from 1841 until his death in 1865, so his contact with the exhibitions in Boston may well have extended beyond his removal to Gloucester about 1848.

The visual evidence would seem to be conclusive. In some respects, it is hard to believe that the structural similarities so readily observed in a comparison of works such as Van Goyen's *Haarlem Sea* (figure 5) and Lane's *Sunrise through Mist* (figure 6) do not result from a direct cause-and-effect relationship. Yet at the same time, we cannot overlook the peculiar possibilities of affinity.

There were certain philosophical and social similarities between the Dutch republic of the seventeenth century, with its middle-class citizens and respect for humble things, and nineteenth-century America. And there were certain art historical similarities in the direct recourse to nature to create an alternative to the ideal Claudian formula. Thus, as always, there is the possibility that influence acts not so much by direct cause and effect, as by fortifying a proclivity that existed anyway.

But any affinity that we discover between the seventeenth-century Dutch and nineteenth-century Americans cuts across those time barriers mentioned earlier, as part of the telescoping to which I have referred. We can also discover problematic affinities across national barriers within the nineteenth century that bear further research and investigation.

I suggested earlier that other nations also admired the Dutch and produced landscape art curiously similar to that of nineteenth-century America. In Germany and in Scandinavia, similarities in attitudes to the picture, to nature, and to things or objects in nature, as well as to light and atmosphere, provoke us to look for a common root.

Thus, we might notice Washington Allston's sharp shadows and backlighting in *Coast Scene on the Mediterranean* (1811), and be reminded of the German painter Wilhelm von Kobell's *Siege of Kosel* (1808). Or we may speak of the affinities of mood, and the similarity of a high vantage point in Caspar David Friedrich's *Morning in the Mountains* (1811), and Frederic Church's *Scene in Blue Mountains, Jamaica* (1865). Here, as is often the case, the German painting seems more romantic, the light and atmosphere softer.

But there would seem to be extraordinary parallels in attitude and structure between Friedrich's *Solitary Tree* (1823, figure 7) and the German born, Düsseldorf-trained Albert Bierstadt's painting of *Ascutney Mountain from Claremont, New Hampshire* (1862, figure 8). And if we consider Bierstadt's huge spreading tree in *A Hunting Party*, painted in Salisbury in 1855, we can find similarities with Birch

Tree (1831) by the Norwegian artist Johann Christian Dahl and with Thomas Fearnley's Norwegian Fjord – Landscape. Dahl had studied first at the Copenhagen Academy, where Friedrich had also received his early training, then proceeded in 1818 to Dresden to join the group of North German romantics surrounding Friedrich. Fearnley, another Norwegian, was Dahl's pupil and also worked for some time in Dresden. Both the Copenhagen Academy and Dresden were extremely important for the development of a landscape attitude that, though sometimes more overtly romantic than the American, nonetheless offers frequent visual parallels to landscape painting in this country. The Bierstadt, however, is, in a sense, even more daring, because it is more deliberately casual and matter of fact. No hills, no dramatic lighting, no careful spacing at either edge, but rather a spontaneous, almost snapshot framing that cuts into the tree branches both above, and at either side.

Again, we can consider a Waterfall by Fearnley (1837) and Kensett's Trenton Falls (probably of the 1850s) and discover that, despite similarities in the stance assumed by the artist, Kensett seems a bit less artlike, not requiring the framing tree that Fearnley includes at the left, but offering a still more direct and unmanipulated view.

There are many questions to be posed here. How may these affinities be tied to similar attitudes toward the making of a picture? When we find, in the art of the Dane Christen Købke, as in Lakeside near Dosseringen (1838, figure 9), qualities of light and structure that are to be noticed later in the art of Thomas Eakins, such as The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake (1873, figure 10), are the affinities a function of the pragmatic, primitive necessities for fresh discovery of truth that seem to have dominated a Scandinavian tradition with a strong folk root, as they did the American tradition? Or are they, once more, at least as philosophical as they are formal?

Do they have to do with the close artistic and philosophical connections between the Copenhagen Academy and German art, and with the exposure to that German philosophical thought which also made its way to America through the library lists of the Transcendentalists? What connection is there between the haunting mood of Friedrich's drawing of Sunset on Ruegen (1805-1806, figure 11) and Lane's Brace's Rock (1863, figure 12)?

Even insofar as philosophical relationships are concerned, arguments are strong between those who believe in direct influence and those who believe that the Transcendentalists read the Germans, as Stanley Vogel puts it in *German Literary Influences on the American Transcendentalists* (1955), "after their own doctrines had been formulated and used them to substantiate what they had originally stated." In his journal, Emerson quoted Goethe: "The works of nature are ever a

freshly uttered word of God.” In *Nature* (1836) Emerson wrote: “The noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God.” The German painter and philosopher Carus wrote, in *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* (1815-1824): “When man, sensing the immense magnificence of nature, feels his own insignificance, and feeling himself to be in God, enters into this infinity and abandons his individual existence, then his surrender is gain rather than loss. What otherwise only the mind’s eye sees, here becomes almost literally visible, the oneness in the infinity of the universe.” This is paralleled by the famous quotation from Emerson’s *Nature*: “Standing on the bare ground – my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing, I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.”

These are, of course, clearly recognizable as the nature attitudes lying behind many of the paintings noted here, once the picture and the picturesque were replaced by nature. The philosophical attitudes shared by the artists and writers are surely responsible for many of the similarities in the painting. While distinctions exist, reminding us that American art was true to American experience, these similarities, whether based on influence or affinity, display a common core that relates American art, its progress and its solutions, integrally to the art of some parts of the Western world.



1. **Landscape with Mill, 1647. Claude Lorrain.** Oil on canvas, 38 x 51 inches. Gallery Doria-Pamphili, Rome. Photograph: Alinari-Art Reference Bureau.



2. **Pic-Nic, 1846. Thomas Cole.** Oil on canvas, 47 x 71¼ inches. The Brooklyn Museum, A. Augustus Healy Fund, 67.205.2.



3. River Landscape. Albert Cuyp. Drawing. Whereabouts unknown.



4. Entrance of Somes Sound from Southwest Harbor, 1852. Fitz Hugh Lane. Oil on canvas, 24 x 26 inches. Private Collection, Newport.



5. Haarlem Sea, 1656. Jan van Goyen. Oil on wood, 10 x 14 inches. Stadelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Inv. no. 1071.



6. Sunrise through Mist, 1852. Fitz Hugh Lane. Oil on canvas, 24¼ x 36½ inches. Shelburne Museum, Inc., Shelburne, Vermont.



7. Solitary Tree, 1823. Caspar David Friedrich. Oil on canvas, 14 x 18 inches. National-Galerie, Berlin.



8. Ascutney Mountain from Claremont, New Hampshire, 1862. Albert Bierstadt. Oil on canvas, 40½ x 70½ inches. Fruitlands Museum, Harvard, Massachusetts.



9. **Lakeside near Dosseringen, 1838.** Christen Købke. Oil on canvas, 13 x 18 inches. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Inv. no. 359.



10. **The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake, 1873.** Thomas Eakins. Oil on canvas, 40¼ x 60¼ inches. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection, 1984.27.



11. Sunset on Ruegen, 1805-1806. Caspar David Friedrich. Drawing. Private Collection, Zurich.



12. Brace's Rock, 1863. Fitz Hugh Lane. Oil on canvas, 10 x 15 inches. Private Collection.

American Neoclassic Sculpture

I suppose that any discussion of American neoclassic sculpture should open with an illustration of *The Greek Slave* by Hiram Powers (figure 1). So with what I trust will be recognized as characteristic perversity, I offer you instead the Slave's most famous lineal descendant, *The White Captive* by Erastus Dow Palmer of Albany (figure 2). I show this not in the interest of scholarship, but rather as an example of mid-nineteenth-century erotica. It seemed to me that it was only in my talk that this ever popular subject might be advantageously introduced into today's lecture. Ever popular it was, too, for periodicals and books of the period gave no end of attention to comparing the relative merits of the *Captive* and the *Slave*; not, in those pre-Freudian days, in terms of the implied admixture of sex and sadism, but at least in terms of feminine "naturalness," and especially in regard to skin porosity, fleshiness, and the like. And for those who find such marbleized nudes too timid for today's standards, let me next offer to the pedophiliacs among us the foot of *The White Captive* and invite you to search out with me the descendants of Charles Griswold of London, who at one time owned the foot of *The Greek Slave*, in addition to her bust.

Unfortunately, neither the introduction of gentle erotica nor a predilection for the depiction of more extreme bits of anatomy can be considered particularly American characteristics, and the purpose of my talk, of course, is to relate American sculpture to European, perhaps seeking out what might be peculiarly or particularly American. Such a study is somewhat hampered by the general neglect and disfavor into which neoclassic sculpture has fallen in these last one hundred years,

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with examples as William Wetmore Story's once-famous *Jerusalem on Her Desolation* banished by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to a Pennsylvania cemetery and the *Salome* of that same ill-favored gentleman banished by this august institution to the museum in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, a somewhat ironic if intriguing deposition.

We might do well in pursuit of the topic to briefly consider American neoclassic sculpture and its creators in a number of terms — the manner of living of the artists, their techniques, their styles, and their themes. Palmer, already mentioned, had his studio in Albany, and there he worked all of his life, only briefly visiting Italy, and then only late in life. But Palmer was the exception rather than the rule, for the American sculptors contemporary with him spent much and often most of their lives in Florence and in Rome — earlier in the former, later, and for more of them, in Rome, studying, working, selling, living variously good or impoverished lives, and sometimes dying there. Indeed, many of them are buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, which holds in addition a number of splendid monuments by them. The sculptors lived in Rome in the same area where the arts still thrive, on the Via Babuino, Via Margutta, or Via due Marcelli. The reasons for living in Italy were many and diverse, including the continuous artistic tradition of the land, the inexpensiveness of life, the availability of good white Carrara or often Serravezza marble and of trained workmen, but certainly the community of artistic and creative life. From this point of view, our neoclassic artists constituted as a group the first cosmopolitanism to be found in American art. They were part of a greater artistic community, and were not, in their own opinions or in those of others, mere provincials. Some mixed more with Italians as well as other foreigners; some learned Italian and some did not, but they shared a way of life with fellow artists, painters, and particularly sculptors, from England, Germany, and other nations, as well as Italian artists. They followed the same daily routines, ate at the same restaurants, participated in the same annual artists' festivals, and they were conscious of the artistic achievements of Italian, German, and English artists who might be living next door to them. Their patrons, although more often than not visiting Americans, did include Englishmen, Russians, and Italians; some of our artists — Powers, Story, and Harriet Hosmer, particularly — found English patronage almost as rewarding as American. American patrons, in turn, occasionally acquired works by Italian sculptors, which found their way back to these shores.

The technique for the creation of a work of sculpture was the same for the Americans as for the Europeans. Like their contemporaries, our sculptors would make only the original small clay model, which would then be enlarged upon an armature in clay by hired workmen; then a plaster cast was made of this for durability; and then with the aid of various types of pointing machines, it would be

duplicated in marble by hired artisans, some specializing in roughing out the block, some in the more precise finishing, some specializing in busts, some in full-length sculptures; while the original artist sometimes, but only sometimes, applied some finishing touches to the work. Europeans and Americans alike created sculpture by this method, the same artisans often working for both Americans and Italians or Englishmen, though some Americans paid higher wages to workers and models than did their European counterparts. Although this method was frowned upon in subsequent years, and the charge was made that a lifelessness resulted from the sculptor's abnegation of his sculptural responsibilities, it drew forth a number of published defenses of this method by Story, Hosmer, and others — and it was time-honored. Story, in fact, was at pains to point out that Canova, Thorwaldsen, and all the great sculptors of the past had used assistants for the actual manual labor (with the exception of Michelangelo, who, Story went on to state, thus wasted much of his precious and valuable time). For the neoclassic sculptor, the artist was the man of genius, his assistant was a man of talent only. And for all these artists, the dictum variously attributed to Canova and Thorwaldsen held true: "Sculpture is born in Clay, it dies in Plaster, and is resurrected in Marble."

Our sculptors did work in bronze, of course, and increasingly so as time went on, but marble was the preferred medium. The subjects were limited to the human figure — with a very occasional animal — either the total figure or the bust, and occasional digressions, as we have seen, to other parts of the anatomy. Single figures were seen more often, occasionally groups of two or even three. Although the nude figure was the most common, it caused controversy; and the purity of the whiteness of the marble was a strong point in the sculpture's favor. Much criticism can be found among American writers, patrons, and artists themselves, over the practice of the English sculptor John Gibson, of tinting his Venuses and other sculptures with what was variously described as watercolor or tobacco juice. Harriet Hosmer, Gibson's American pupil, was complimented in not following her teacher's practice — though Hosmer is believed to have slightly toned her work to give it a warmish glow. One sculptor, Joseph Mozier, did tint at least one replica of his famous *Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*. The majority of the works by our sculptors were sculptures in the round, though nearly all did create some bas-reliefs; several sculptors, notably Palmer and the young Connecticut artist Edward Sheffield Bartholomew, were known particularly for their reliefs, as in the latter's *Hagar and Ishmael*.

Stylistically, American sculptors were aiming at the recreation of classical ideals and forms. For their models they looked particularly to the great Europeans who preceded them, to Antonio Canova, and to the Dane Bertel Thorwaldsen. Canova was suspicious to them, however, for while they admired his technique, Canova was found too pretty, too lascivious and sensual, too French for American tastes, as in

his Hebe; while Thorwaldsen, closer in time and even known to some of the Americans, was more heroic, more severe, and embodied more the homely virtues. Strangely enough, the most famous neoclassic sculpture for American art lovers was not a work by either Canova or Thorwaldsen but rather the *Ariadne on a Panther* (figure 3) by the German artist Johan Heinrich von Dannecker, which was displayed in the private museum of a Mr. Bethmann in Frankfurt, Germany, and which became an obligatory stop on every artistic pilgrimage of the early and middle nineteenth century. The subject of color in nineteenth-century sculpture — mentioned above in connection with John Gibson — is a much more complicated one than it may at first seem, and much controversy ensued about the *Ariadne*; not that she was tinted, but the window of the pavilion where she was shown on a rotating pedestal was filled with glass casting what was variously described as a purple or pinkish light, a light intended to suggest a flesh color — the flesh of *Ariadne* if not of her companion. *Ariadne* in form and pose gave birth to a number of conscious imitations and variations by American artists, such as William Henry Rinehart's *Hero* (figure 4). Likewise, the most famous English sculpture of the early nineteenth century was Sir Francis Chantrey's *Sleeping Children*, of 1817, in Lichfield Cathedral, of which replicas were actually brought to America; this, in turn, served as inspiration for both Thomas Crawford's *Babes in the Woods* and William Henry Rinehart's *Sleeping Children*.

Our sculptors did not turn only to the work of earlier neoclassic artists but, of course, to the antique itself, with which they were truly familiar, particularly through the Vatican gallery. Some sources are especially obvious, and no better example can be given than Harriet Hosmer's *Sleeping Faun*, the derivation from the Barberini Faun having been noted at the various exhibitions of the work, as at the Paris International Exposition of 1867.

But our sculptors, though often inspired by the classical world, nevertheless modified what they found there. Joseph Mozier's *Rebecca*, for instance, classic in features, hair style, and drapery in the original plaster, became a more naturalistic, somewhat romantic and somewhat Gothicized maiden of rather peculiar anatomical proportions when she finally made it into marble. Furthermore, as a viable aesthetic style for our sculptors, neoclassicism held sway for over fifty years, and it is more than logical to expect changes to have occurred during this time span. The earlier work was, in general, characterized by great simplicity and restraint, a kind of austerity of form and outline, best typified by Powers's *Slave*. If we compare, for instance, Powers's earliest full-length, his *Eve Tempted* (figure 5), with his second, later *Eve Disconsolate* of 1868 (figure 6), we find a new emotionalism, a kind of pathetic quality in expression that is not unrelated to a Pre-Raphaelite expressionism, both to the English Pre-Raphaelites and to actual Quattrocento sculpture. She

is a striding figure, too. And if we consider Powers's last full-length, *The Last of the Tribe*, we find a figure in full flight with a more broken outline and the actual implication of motion. Indeed, as neoclassicism progressed, influences from the officially despised baroque period infiltrated into the altering aesthetic, as witness Randolph Rogers's famous *Nydia* (figure 7) – the most often reproduced full-length sculpture by any American. And while Thorwaldsen's famous *Night and Day* served as inspirations for similar subjects by Palmer and by Rinehart, in his *Morning and Evening*, the actual forms, in their grace, curvilinear patterns, and the like, suggest much more a relationship with the theoretically ignored rococo of Falconnet. The mate to Rinehart's *Hero* was his statue of *Leander*, probably the finest male nude among the neoclassic productions, a statue that was obviously inspired partly by Michelangelo's *David*. And Harriet Hosmer's quite beautifully moving *Beatrice Cenci* owes a great deal to the famous *S. Cecilia* of Stefano Maderno, which could have been seen in *S. Cecilia* in Trastevere.

Our sculptors were aware of and interested in contemporary Italian sculpture, too. Canova had been succeeded by Lorenzo Bartolini as the leading Italian sculptor, although Bartolini's later naturalism was diametrically opposed to the neoclassic aesthetic. Nevertheless, Bartolini was much admired by Americans, including such artists as Powers and Randolph Rogers, who was his pupil. One of the most complimented sculptures by Bartolini was his monument to Princess Zamoyska in *S. Croce*, which may in part have served in spirit, if not in form, for the Tomb of Mlle. Falconnet by Harriet Hosmer in *S. Andrea della Fratte* – the only sepulchral monument to have been awarded to an American neoclassic sculptor for a church in Rome.

In the middle of the century, one sign of the break away from the austerity of the earlier years can be found in virtuoso textural treatment. This is a revival of that simulated superrealism so prevalent in Naples in the middle of the eighteenth century, as seen in Antonio Corradini's *Pudenza* in *S. Severo*. The Creation of marble sculptures featuring a kind of see-through illusionism is particularly associated in the middle of the nineteenth century with Raphaele Monti in his most elaborate monument, *The Sleep of Sorrow and the Dream of Joy*, of 1861, a monument to the *Risorgimento*. Perhaps because of their unfamiliarity with the tradition, or the technical difficulties inherent therein, not too many Americans practiced this form of illusionistic sculpture, but we do have, for instance, Joseph Mozier's *Veiled Undine* (figure 8) and Randolph Rogers's *Flight of the Spirit*, the J. W. Waterman monument of 1867-1869. Another aspect of the changes that developed within the neoclassic school was a general broadening of attention to surface detail, not necessarily illusionistic, which led to the creation of such works as Peirce Francis Connelly's *Ophelia* (figure 9), a typical late neoclassic piece of costumed historicism.

This form of costume piece, in which elaborate surface patterns assumed greater significance than sculptural form, became increasingly prevalent, as did, by the way, an attention to Shakespearean subjects. As a matter of fact, it was the work of these late neoclassicists, such as Connelly, Richard Henry Park, James Haseltine, and Sir Moses Ezekiel, that dominated the sculpture section of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, usually referred to as the death knell of neoclassic sculpture.

A final stylistic trend that should be noted is that of a greater introduction of movement. We have seen this already in Rogers's *Nydia*, and we can find it again, for instance, in Larkin Mead's *Flight*. But this is indicative of other changes as well. It may seem incongruous to suggest impressionism and neoclassicism as related or complementary, but as time went on neoclassicists turned their attention increasingly to subjects that emphasized change and movement rather than solid elements. If the impressionist painters turned away from the mountains and the rocks toward light, color, and atmosphere, so, too, did the sculptors, who more and more gave their patrons depictions of aerial themes. Alexander Galt's *Aurora* and Thomas Gould's *West Wind* are only two of literally dozens and dozens of depictions of winds, stars, and other phenomena that imply motion, change, and evanescent effects no matter how solidly these are encased in marble.

On the other end of the scale is the fact that neoclassic monuments tended to become heavier and more ponderous as time went on. We can see that equally well in the work of the Belgian neoclassicist J. J. Ducaju, as in his *Babylon* — depicting the whore of same — and in William Wetmore Story's *Semiramis* (figure 10). I do not speak now of derivation, of course, but rather general stylistic similarities. But it might be well to mention that although most historians lump together all of neoclassicism, there are profound differences between sculptor and sculptor, between the early and late works of each artist. There are particular individual styles and characteristics and influences of one artist upon another within the American group — Story's influence upon Franklin Simmons is particularly strong, for instance.

In terms of subject matter, our sculptors did many portraits, of course, but this was often bread-and-butter work for them. Some, such as Joel Hart and Shobal Clevenger, produced primarily portraits; others, such as Story, did relatively few, though some of his sitters, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, were especially notable. Some of these portraits are particularly striking, such as Thomas Gould's *Kamehameha I*. There were fancy pieces, or "conceits" as they were called, playful, trifling sculpture, the most famous being Harriet Hosmer's *Puck*, examples of which can be found today from Barbados to Sydney, Australia. In the 1850s there were an increasing number of genre sculptures, particularly by such artists as Randolph

Rogers and Chauncy B. Ives, as in the latter's *Truant*; and it was the popularity of these in the fifties that led to the successful commercialization in the plaster medium by John Rogers. That an interest in marble genre sculpture was not a particularly American phenomenon can be seen in the *Girl Reading* by Pietro Magni, of 1861. Indeed, the growing interest in genre themes can be found even within more ostensibly grand themes, for instance, Thomas Crawford's treatment of a classical subject, *Apollo and Diana*, in terms of genre sentiment and detail, or in Randolph Rogers's literary *Atala* and *Chacas*.

The major works of our sculptors, however, were their grand-manner themes — historical, religious, classical, allegorical, or literary works — usually female figures, though most of our artists sculpted one or two male allegories also. American literature provided the source for some of this sculpture and that, of course, is more true of American artists than for European ones — as in Joseph Mozier's *Indian Girl's Lament*, based on a poem by William Cullen Bryant. What is generally not realized, however, is how much neoclassic sculpture is based upon the writings of the English Romantic poets, even when the subject is ostensibly historical, religious, or classical. Harriet Hosmer's *Oenone*, for instance, a depiction of the shepherd wife Paris deserted for Helen, is not a direct recounting of a classical legend but based upon a Tennyson poem. The popularity of the subject of *Leander and Hero* is based not only upon Byron's poetry, but, of course, also upon his attempt to rival Leander's feat by swimming the Hellespont. Such derivations from English poetry can be duplicated ad infinitum. Among historical subjects, the early and mid-nineteenth century interest in the recreation of the lives of famous and preferred artists of the past did not have as great an appeal to Americans as it did to European artists from Ingres on; but we do have Thomas Crawford's *Raphael*, who leans not on one but two lecterns, one Gothic and one Renaissance — and the date 1499 in Roman numerals on the base suggests Raphael as the artist who led painting from the medieval to the modern world. Among historical subjects, one distinctly American preference was for the story of Columbus. The 1840s on saw a whole rash of depictions of Columbus, in painting and in sculpture, culminating in Rogers's doors for the Capitol and also in Mead's *Columbus* and *Isabella*. The beginning of this popularity was not, strangely enough, John Vanderlyn's *Rotunda* painting, but rather the whole series of major Columbus pictures begun by Emanuel Leutze in Düsseldorf in 1842 and immediately popular.

American artists, in general, tended in biblical representations to derive their subjects from the Old rather than the New Testament, as witness the various representations of Ruth, such as those by Henry Kirke Brown. This preference was probably in part a reaction against the saintly icons of Catholicism, which surrounded our primarily Protestant-believing and fundamentalist-thinking artists.

Another such biblical depiction is Edmonia Lewis's *Hagar*, a logical enough statue for Miss Lewis, who was the most exotic creature among the sculptors – half Negro, half American Indian, though reports distressingly mentioned her denial of her Negro ancestry. The majority of Miss Lewis's subjects related to her ancestry, and *Hagar* was not only lost in the wilderness, symbolic of the alienation of the Negro, but she was also Egyptian, and to the nineteenth-century mind, Egypt represented Africa. Naturally, the subject of slavery was particularly popular among American artists: first, of course, white slavery as in Palmer's *Captive* and Powers's *Slave*, but also Negro, as we can see in Edmonia Lewis's *Forever Free* of 1867. Direct reflections of the Civil War are not common among American artists, the most significant exception being Palmer's *Peace in Bondage* of 1863, logical again for the one major sculptor who remained in America during the conflict. Nevertheless, many of the neoclassicists turned to the lucrative production of Civil War monuments after the conflict, particularly Randolph Rogers, as in his *Rhode Island soldiers and sailors monument* of 1866-1871 in Providence, and Martin Milmore, as in his great *Sphinx* in Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

Miss Lewis's other ancestry led her, as well as many other sculptors, to the depiction of Indian subjects. Her *Marriage of Hiawatha* was destroyed twenty years ago in a fire in the library at East Corinth, Vermont, but small statuettes of *Hiawatha* and *Minnehaha* still exist. Interestingly enough, Augustus Saint-Gaudens lived a few houses away from Miss Lewis when he was in Rome in 1872, modeling his *Hiawatha*. Watery themes and themes of death abound in neoclassic sculpture; thus themes of watery deaths were particularly popular – as we can see from Paul Aker's *Dead Pearl Diver* and Edward Brackett's *Shipwrecked Mother and Child*, the latter inspired by and gaining great renown because of the recent tragic death by drowning of Margaret Fuller.

Nationalistic allegories relating to America were, of course, favored by American artists, but this is particularly true before the Civil War; afterwards, the disillusionment with the American ideal tended to steer sculptors away from such subjects. Powers did an *America* and a *California*, though it should be pointed out that his *California* was originally called *La Dorada*, and he was perfectly willing to allow it to be considered a symbol of Australia, rather than California, when there seemed to be a possibility of its acquisition there.

The American artistic community in Rome was distinguished by the number of talented lady sculptors such as Hosmer and Lewis, and as one might expect, these ladies were every bit as much champions of women's rights as their counterparts today. In this regard, they tended to specialize in depicting strong-minded women of high historical importance. Harriet Hosmer's most ambitious sculpture was her statue of *Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra*, led through the streets of Rome in chains.

Cleopatra was also a subject for male and female sculptors alike, though Margaret Foley's chaste and ladylike depiction contrasts sharply with that by James Haseltine, which seems more related to the interpretation and anatomy of Elizabeth Taylor. For some unaccountable reason, the ladies were prone to the production of elaborate fountains, but Emma Stebbins's *Angel of the Waters*, the Bethesda fountain in Central Park, outdistances those by Miss Hosmer and Miss Foley by a good deal.

There were, then, certain thematic preferences and proclivities of the Americans working in Rome and Florence. There were areas, too, which they did not undertake, or undertook in only a limited way. These include the aforementioned illusionistic sculpture, the creation of multi-figured group sculptures, and particularly subjects more overtly erotic. Venuses were far more common among European sculptors than among Americans, though we did have such examples as Horatio Greenough's *Venus Victrix*; and an American visitor who viewed Dannecker's *Ariadne* in Mr. Bethmann's Frankfurt museum and stated that it was awkward to contemplate naked statues with young gentlemen was only echoing a constant American sentiment.

But one is, I think, due for a real disappointment if one seeks a particularly American art among our neoclassicists. Their techniques, their styles, and by and large their subjects, were consistent with what was being created by their European contemporaries. Indeed, this is only as it should be, and perhaps we would do better to admire their integration with their period than to look for provincial isolating characteristics. Indeed, I personally feel that except for a certain naïveté growing out of a relative unfamiliarity with the tradition of the past, American art — portraiture, landscape painting, still life, and genre, as well as sculpture — had few distinctly American characteristics in the nineteenth century and should rather be studied and appreciated for its relationship to its European counterparts. This was recognized sixty years ago in the *Modern Sculpture Hall* in the Metropolitan Museum, where American and European works were offered indiscriminately. At the same time, even that late, our neoclassic sculptors were capable of profoundly moving monuments, such as William Wetmore Story's *Angel of Grief*, his memorial to his deceased wife in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome.



1. **The Greek Slave**, version of 1869.
Hiram Powers. Marble, h. 66 inches.
 The Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mr.
 Charles F. Bound, 55.14.



2. **The White Captive**, 1859. **Erastus Dow
 Palmer.** Marble, h. 66 inches. The
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of
 Hamilton Fish, 94.9.3.



3. **Ariadne on a Panther, 1803.**
Johan Heinrich von Dannecker. Plaster. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie. From Fred Licht's *Sculpture, 19th & 20th Centuries* (Greenwich, Connecticut, 1967). This is a study for the group that was destroyed during World War II.



4. **Hero, 1871.** William Henry Rinehart. Marble. The Newark Museum, Mr. and Mrs. George K. Batt Fund, 64.7.



5. **Eve Tempted, 1842. Hiram Powers. Marble.** National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Purchased in memory of Ralph Cross Johnson, 1968.155.1.



6. **Eve Disconsolate. Hiram Powers. Marble, h. 77 inches.** The Hudson River Museum, Gift of the Berol Family in memory of Mrs. Gella Berolzheimmer, February 1951.

7. **Nydia**, 1859. **William Randolph Rogers**. Marble, h. 55 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of James H. Douglas, 99.7.2.



8. **Veiled Undine**. **Joseph Mozier**. Marble, h. 64 inches. University of Dayton.



9. Ophelia. Peirce Francis Connelly. From William J. Clark, Jr.'s *Great American Sculptures* (Philadelphia, 1877).

10. Semiramis, 1873. William Wetmore Story.
Marble. Robert Motley, Paramount, California.



Foreign Influences in American Painting and Architecture after 1860

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century many of our artists freed themselves from the dependence upon England that had existed since Colonial times and went to Germany to study; then, in the 1850s, an ever-increasing stream of Americans, beginning with William Morris Hunt and Eastman Johnson, both born in 1824, and extending down to Edmund Tarbell, born in 1862, went to France. The fact that Johnson had been in Düsseldorf in 1849 and moved to Paris in 1855 is the best indication of the growing importance of France as a place of study. There were other prominent artists and architects from the United States in Paris in the fifties; the best-known American to establish himself in Europe — Whistler — arrived in 1855. Four years later he moved to London, where he spent most of the rest of his successful career. Hunt's brother, the architect Richard Morris Hunt, was also in Paris, as was William LeBaron Jenney, who studied engineering at the Ecole Centrale.

An even more distinguished group appeared in Paris in the sixties. Homer and Eakins were in Paris only briefly, but Mary Cassatt remained there for life. Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Louis C. Tiffany came, and G. P. A. Healy, who worked all over Europe, had a long career centered in France from 1867 to 1892.

But Paris, of course, was not the only goal of American artists. The sixties saw Elihu Vedder settling in Rome, where he stayed for the rest of his life. George Boughton, trained in this country, moved permanently to London in 1862, but then England had been the land of his birth.

In the seventies J. Alden Weir, Theodore Robinson, John Singer Sargent, and W.

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L. Picknell turned up in Paris; in the eighties William M. Harnett, who had found insufficient response to his still lifes in Munich, exhibited more successfully at the Paris Exposition of 1885. Balancing the popularity of Paris still was the appeal of London.

By the nineties certain of our artists were accepted in the upper reaches of the international art world, and in 1898 a group of Americans, all impressionists and mostly Paris-trained, founded an association called the Ten. Although there had not been much of an artistic flow from Europe to this country in the mid-century, by the last decades of the nineteenth century there was a great deal. French painting of distinction came into this country first under the auspices of William Morris Hunt in Boston. It arrived in New York in quantity largely because of Mary Cassatt's close association with the great collector Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer. Similarly in Chicago, Mary Cassatt encouraged and advised the Potter Palmers.

As in painting, the major influences on American architecture until the 1880s had been from England. This was natural because of traditions continuing from the Colonial period. But during the decades from the time of the founding of The Metropolitan Museum of Art to the early years of this century, there was a shift away from English influence, evident even in the designs for the Museum building itself. The original structure (figure 1), at the back toward the park, was designed in the seventies by Calvert Vaux and J. Wrey Mould. Both of them were born in England and trained there before they arrived in this country about twenty years earlier. But the Fifth Avenue front (figure 2), added in the nineties, was planned by Richard Morris Hunt, reputedly the first American to study at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. While the older building incorporates English details, such as Victorian Gothic arches and the sort of bold banding that Mould had introduced in the fifties in All Souls Church in New York, the Hunt facade is monumentally academic and classical in a rather French way. Thus the Metropolitan Museum itself illustrates the change in the sources of inspiration of American architects over the twenty years or so between the designs of the back and that of the front.

Much the same evidence can be found in Boston. The original Museum of Fine Arts on Copley Square (figure 3) was a Victorian Gothic building by Sturgis and Brigham; at right angles to it rose the Boston Public Library (figure 4), begun ten years later in 1888 by McKim, Mead and White. McKim had been at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in 1870, and the probable basis for the *parti* is a French building, Henri Labrousse's *Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève* in Paris, although the detailing derives from Italy, being based on the *Tempio Malatestiano* at Rimini and the *Cancelleria Palace* in Rome. By the eighties the firm of McKim, Mead and White was employing various young men who were returning from study at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. Again we see this shift from English-inspired, and often English-designed,

buildings to buildings that are French-inspired and the product of Americans who had received their professional training in France.

After Hunt, the next American to study at the Ecole was H. H. Richardson. Because funds from home ran out during the Civil War, he never completed the course; instead, he went to work for Henri Labrouste's brother Théodore, working under him on the Hospice d'Ivry (figure 5), an old people's home near Paris. It is not likely that Richardson had anything to do with the design, but it represents institutional Second Empire architecture of the simpler sort rather than the splendors of the new Louvre, on which Hunt had actually worked, that were more frequently echoed outside of France.

One of the few examples of Richardson's work that clearly reflects his Paris training is the Dorsheimer house (figure 6) in Buffalo of 1868. In its simplicity, this is quite remote from the lush Second Empire mode in common use in England and America during the period. More important for Richardson before long, however, was his admiration for contemporary English work. Even before the Dorsheimer house, in his earliest commissions for churches in Springfield (figure 7) and Medford, Massachusetts, Richardson was beginning to forget his Paris training, for he judged correctly that what would appeal were churches in the Victorian Gothic mode. However, the second of these, Grace Church, Medford, of 1867-1869, shows a highly idiosyncratic use, not at all English, of glacial boulders. Although much simplified as to detail, it is generically a Victorian Gothic parish church, reflecting or, more accurately, paralleling such a contemporary English example as William Burges's St. Michael's, Lowfield Heath.

In the building that made Richardson's reputation, Trinity Church, on the east side of Copley Square in Boston, which went up at the same time as its neighbor, the Museum of Fine Arts, he was also operating under English rather than French inspiration. He used Victorian Gothic polychromy as well as a Romanesque sort, and there are various distinct echoes of current English architecture, slightly modified by his shift, around 1871, from pointed to rounded arches. However, the general massing of the church, especially from the rear, does derive from ancient French monuments, particularly the churches of Auvergne; moreover, as is well known, the lantern is based on that of the Romanesque cathedral of Salamanca in Spain. But these are Richardson's personal choices; they have nothing to do with his French training. Contemporary French architects would not have drawn from the medieval sources he preferred.

An earlier house project of 1868 and the Andrews house (no longer extant) in Newport of 1872 date from the years when Richardson was picking up the latest English ideas for domestic planning. In the first case the influence comes quite specifically from the plan of Hinderton by Alfred Waterhouse that had just been republished in the second edition of Robert Kerr's *The Gentleman's House*. In these

plans the large living hall has a stair rising out of it in the wing and other rooms loosely grouped around. More or less parallel with the development of this sort of planning by Richardson is the work of Norman Shaw in England. The Andrews plan, with its enormous "stair-case saloon," as it was called, around which the separate rooms are symmetrically arranged, is much in the manner of Shaw's houses, the first of which was published in perspective in *Building News* the year before. Richardson must have seen it, although he echoes Shavian details only rather remotely in the elevations as known from the drawings that survive. Two years later, with some assistance from the brilliant young draughtsman Stanford White, who was working with him, he went much further in following the latest currents of English architecture in his Watts Sherman house in Newport.

Perhaps the most striking examples of influence from a specific English architect whom Richardson admired were the towers of the Buffalo State Hospital (figure 8) as revised in 1871-1872. These certainly seem to have been derived from the tower in the foreground of William Burges's project of 1866 for the Law Courts (figure 9) in London. The following year, or perhaps the same year, we find Richardson taking the rear tower of the Burges Law Courts project and using it on his Hampden County Courthouse (figure 10) in Springfield, Massachusetts, commissioned in 1871 and built in 1872-1873.

There are other English influences on the Courthouse, notably the triple arcade at the base, the tall mullioned windows, and the stone dormers. The *parti* with open arcade in the middle and tower centered above would seem to derive from E. W. Godwin's Town Hall (figure 11) in Northampton, England, designed in 1861. Godwin had also been associated with Burges on the Law Courts project of 1866. Furthermore, Eastlake's *History of the Gothic Revival* appeared in late 1871, and the most advanced building shown in it was W. Eden Nesfield's Cloverley Hall (figure 12) in Shropshire of 1865-1868. Richardson must certainly have seen the book as soon as it appeared, for his dormers on the Hampden County Courthouse are slightly truncated versions of those illustrated in the Eastlake book.

Burges was the most important English architect employed on a nineteenth-century building project in this country. He never came to America, but in 1874 he provided the extensive scheme for Trinity College (figure 13), Hartford, consisting of four quadrangles with a chapel in the middle and a variety of towers and stone dormers. Of this scheme only a portion was completed, but that is curiously Richardsonian in feeling, not, I think, because Burges knew anything about Richardson's work, but because of the relationship Barbara Novak terms "affinity." This affinity is emphasized by the fact that the material used for the Burges buildings in Hartford is the local brownstone, the favorite building material of Richardson.

One further phase of English influence is represented in Sever Hall (figure 14), of

1878-1880, at Harvard. Richardson's admiration for the old eighteenth-century buildings in the Harvard Yard is obvious here; but in some of the details, especially the pediment, which is not at all like that of eighteenth-century Hollis Hall but decorated with cut brick, he was certainly drawing on a house in Shaw's newer manner — called "Queen Anne" — Lowther Lodge (figure 15) in London of 1873-1874. Richardson was not alone in being influenced by the "Queen Anne" phase of Shaw's work. Indeed it was one of the constituent elements, as Vincent Scully has made clear, of that peculiarly American domestic style — the "Shingle Style" of the 1880s.

In what Scully considered the first of the Shingle-style houses, the C. J. Morrill house at Mount Desert, Maine, by W. R. Emerson, of 1879, there are still some conspicuously Shavian elements: the tall fluted chimneys and the large grouped window areas. But in another Shingle-style house of perhaps the following year, Shingleside House (figure 16) at Swampscott, Massachusetts, by Arthur Little, the Colonial element is stronger than the Shavian, although the large two-story hall with its window-wall certainly derives from Shaw. The interesting thing about Little's house is that it was published in an English magazine. I will not say that the house itself had any influence in England, because influence from America is something that came there only considerably later; but it is evidence of current English interest in what was happening in America, by this time something quite different from the work Shaw and his contemporaries were doing in England.

A change in American architecture came before Richardson's death in the early eighties with the designing and building of the Villard houses in New York. Here the direct inspiration is the Cancelleria Palace of 1500 in Rome. The designer, Joseph M. Wells, knew the Roman palace at first hand, but also studied it in the French publication of Letarouilly of the 1840s. But the rejection of the English High Victorian and even of Shavian-manorial irregularity and picturesqueness is here at its extreme even at the very beginning. It was, moreover, almost immediately reflected in the planning of the firm's H. A. C. Taylor house in Newport, a year or two later, in which there was a return to the formal Anglo-Palladian mode of the eighteenth century in a house specifically inspired by the Colonial architecture of Newport. The Taylor house, completely symmetrical in design except for the service wing, represents an early stage of the Colonial revival that was destined to last down to our own time.

The reason I mention the Colonial revival here, however, is because it illustrates that Americans seemed to have reached this point before the English. The first comparable English house is Norman Shaw's Fred White house in Queen's Gate, London, which is also formal and symmetrical externally, though not so symmetrical in plan. The date of this house is 1887, several years later than the H. A. C.

Taylor house, and the client was an American diplomat who may very well have known the Taylor house.

This is the point where the tide turns, when American leadership, although not yet much followed, was beginning to be recognized abroad. Only a faint trace of English influence survived in America. Church architects remained faithful to English models longer than others, especially architects working on Episcopal churches. In 1907-1908, the plans for the Anglican Cathedral in Washington were obtained from the English architect G. F. Bodley and his pupil Henry Vaughn, then long settled in America, but this was the last of the English influence here. It remains to be seen what may result in the later twentieth century from the influx of younger English architects who have been teaching of late in our architectural schools somewhat as the French did two generations ago.



1. First wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1874-1880. Calvert Vaux and J. Wrey Mould.

2. Design for the central section of the Fifth Avenue façade of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1895. Richard Morris Hunt and Richard Howland Hunt.





3. **Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,**
1872-1879. John H. Sturgis
and Charles Brigham.
Photograph: Museum of Fine
Arts, Boston.

4. **Original project for the Public
Library, Boston, 1888-1892.**
McKim, Mead and White.
From *American Architect and
Building News* (June 9, 1888).



5. **Hospice des Incurables, Ivry,**
Seine, France, 1862-1865.
Théodore Labrouste.
Photograph: Giraudon.

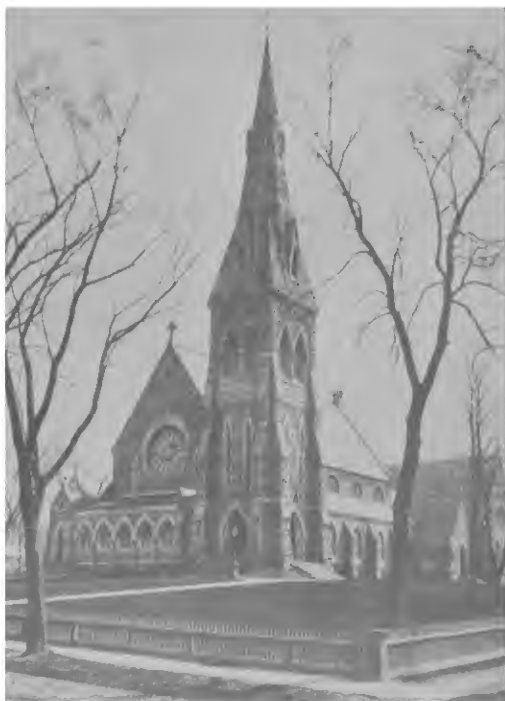


6. Dorsheimer house, Buffalo, New York, 1868. H.H. Richardson. Photograph: Jay W. Baxtresser.



7. Unity Church, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1866-1869. H.H. Richardson. Photograph: Richard Pope.

8. State Hospital, Buffalo, New York, 1872-1878. H.H. Richardson. Photograph: Jay W. Baxtresser.





9. Project for the Law Courts, London, 1866. William Burges. From *The Builder* (May 4, 1867).

10. Hampden County Courthouse as originally completed, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1871-1873. H.H. Richardson.

11. Design for the Town Hall, Northampton, England, 1861. E.W. Godwin. From *Building News* (November 8, 1861).



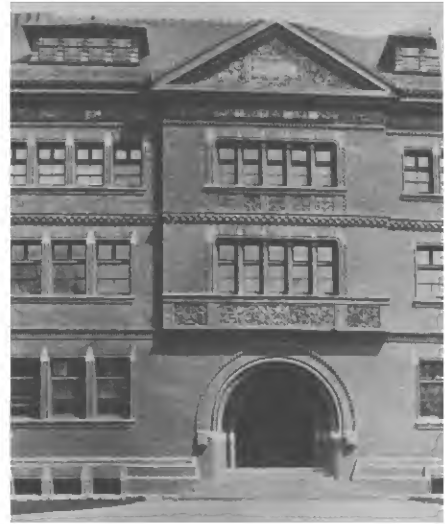


12. Original perspective of Cloverley Hall, Shropshire, England, 1865-1868. W. Eden Nesfield. From C.L. Eastlake's *History of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1872 [1871]).

13. Project for Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, 1874. William Burges. Photograph: Trinity College.

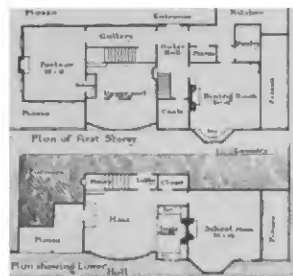
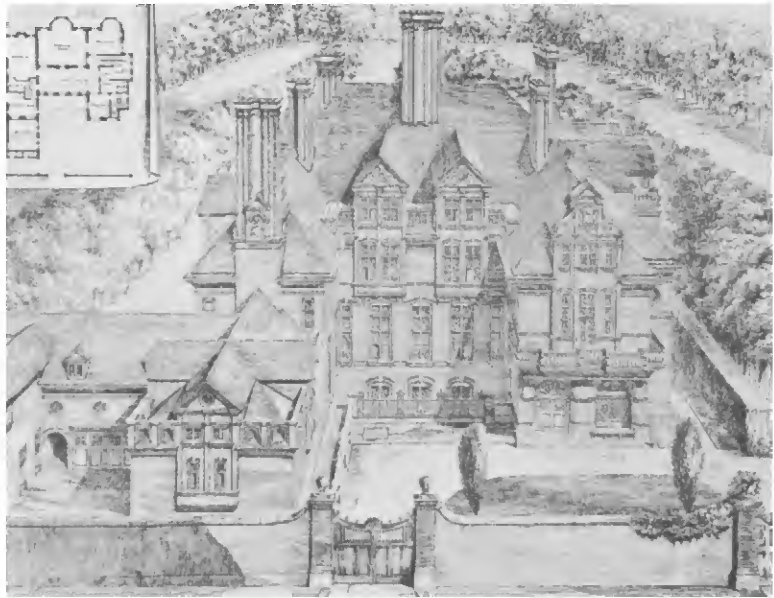


14. Sever Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1878-1880. H.H. Richardson.



15. Lowther Lodge, London, 1873-1874. R. Norman Shaw. From *Building News* (June 25, 1875).

16. Shingleside House, Swampscott, Massachusetts, about 1880. Arthur Little. From *Building News* (April 28, 1882).



Stylistic Interplay between Central Europe and America:

Architecture and Painting from 1860 to 1914

English and French influences on American art of the late nineteenth century are fairly well known. Less familiar to us are the influences from Central Europe and the reciprocal effects our developing arts had on the Germanic areas of the Continent during these same years.

At least one monument in America by a Central European, however, is known to everyone. The Brooklyn Bridge, built from 1869 to 1883, and one of the greatest feats of engineering in the nineteenth century, is still very much a part of the New York cityscape. Its designer, John Roebling, was a native of Mühlhausen, Prussia, who came to the United States in 1831, at the age of twenty-five. Trained as an engineer, Roebling first achieved importance in the the history of American building with several cable-suspended aqueducts and then with his Niagara Falls Bridge of 1851 to 1855. The Brooklyn Bridge was his last and finest work.

Architecturally the Brooklyn Bridge is a striking vestige of the Gothic revival in America. Critics were fascinated by the dynamic swing of the suspension cables, but many objected to the piers. Among the detractors was Leopold Eidlitz, a native of Prague, who offered his services to redesign these gigantic hulks of masonry. Eidlitz did not disapprove of the idea of using pointed arches, for most of his own work was in a Gothic mode, as befitted his training. After studying in Prague and Vienna, he had come to New York in 1843 and worked for Richard Upjohn. Devoted to the writings of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, Eidlitz, like his two literary mentors, is remembered more as a writer and critic than as a practicing architect. Often quoted is his complaint that "American architecture is the art of covering one thing with another thing to imitate a third thing which, if genuine, would not be desirable."

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Eidlitz was never completely Americanized, and retained the critical stance of an outsider.

His son, Cyrus L. W. Eidlitz, was born in this country; yet he was sent to Germany to complete his architectural education at the Royal Academy in Stuttgart. Cyrus Eidlitz designed the Dearborn Street Station in Chicago (figure 1), which was built from 1883 to 1885. Conceived in forms vaguely reminiscent of the *Rundbogenstil*, the station was robust and up-to-date with explicit references to the Romanesque revival, which the senior Eidlitz had helped to establish in this country. The whole was given picturesque focus by placing a tall, machicolated tower slightly off center and climaxing it with a jerkin-head roof of the most rustic South German sort.

It should be noted that Chicago was the scene of crucial phases in the architectural careers of at least two other representatives of the German-speaking world, Dankmar Adler and Adolf Loos. Adler, without whom Louis Sullivan might never have known practical success, was born in Thuringia. He was brought to this country at the age of ten and was trained here. Loos came in 1893 to see the World's Columbian Exposition and stayed on to work in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York. After returning to Europe in 1896, he began to alienate his professional colleagues by extolling the wonders of America in the coffee houses of Vienna.

Bruno Schmitz was another German architect who, like Loos, came for only a short time. He was the designer of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Indianapolis — the result of a competition held in 1888, although it was not completed until 1901. Schmitz had studied at the Düsseldorf Academy, where so many American painters were trained at mid-century. Two sculptors, one an American (George T. Brewster), the other an Austrian (Rudolph Schwartz, who remained in this country), collaborated with Schmitz in the execution of this bombastic and not altogether attractive monument, which is remarkable primarily for its scale. It still does startling things to downtown Indianapolis.

Back in Germany, Schmitz went on to become the architect of even more ponderous monuments built at the height of the Bismarckian era. He may, however, have gleaned some ideas about composition during his American sojourn, as his *Völkerschlacht* Monument (figure 2), near Leipzig, suggests. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and others have noted certain hints of H. H. Richardson here. In contrast to Schmitz's earlier effort in Indianapolis and his preliminary project for this structure, the forms in the final version were simpler and more massive. Schmitz emphasized the rich textures of the masonry. Few had been so adept at this as Richardson, whose work Schmitz no doubt had seen in the United States. In any event, by the 1890s Richardson was being given considerable attention in architectural books and periodicals in Germany.

Some Richardsonian influence has often been observed in the main railroad sta-

tion at Stuttgart, designed by Paul Bonatz and F. E. Scholer in 1911 (completed in 1927). The elements of arch and ashler are even more impressive than in Schmitz's Leipzig monument. Located at the north end of the Königstrasse, the station remains a striking example of urban monumentality. It far outranked the City Hall, completed in 1903 and irreparably damaged in World War II, as a symbol of the city.

The former City Hall in Stuttgart was a symmetrical structure, its details adapted from late medieval and early Renaissance traditions of the homeland. One of the designs submitted in the competition for that building, held in 1895, was the work of Alfred F. M. Lange, "from New York and living in Vienna" (figure 3). His complicated front elevation was derived from both the Romanesque revival in Germany and the Richardsonian Romanesque in America. Lange received no prize for his scheme, which was nevertheless chosen for publication with the results of the competition – indicating some German interest in the idea of Romanesque revival seats of local government, a fashion that had culminated in the United States in Richardson's Allegheny County buildings, completed in 1888 at Pittsburgh.

The German Romanesque revival was restricted chiefly to churches. It began slowly in the 1820s and was still popular in 1891 when Franz Schwechten designed the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. The style was usually Rhenish in derivation, as seen also in the Church of St. Rochus in Düsseldorf, built from 1894 to 1897, by Josef Kleesattel. In the case of St. Rochus, the pastor wished to emulate the venerated Church of the Holy Apostles in Cologne, where he had presided earlier. The result was more vigorous than the Berlin example, but had a superabundance of polygonal protrusions complicated by numerous corbel tables.

A sharp contrast is offered by several smaller churches that began to appear after the turn of the century, when the typically German vocabulary of the Romanesque was often discarded in favor of simpler solutions. The Evangelical Church in Bayenthal (figure 4), a suburb of Cologne, represents this trend. Designed in 1903 by the Berlin architect Otto March, the compact massing of its elemental forms surely reflects a knowledge of Richardson and his American followers. The Bayenthal church is, in fact, remarkably similar to the Beloit College chapel by Patton and Fisher, a photograph of which appeared in *Neubauten in Nordamerika*, a series published in Berlin between 1897 and 1899. When March received the Bayenthal commission, he had just completed a Protestant church for the American congregation in Berlin. So his special interest in the ecclesiastical architecture of the United States is not surprising.

A slightly larger and in some ways more fascinating example of a "Richardsonian" building in the Rhineland is the Luther Church in Karlsruhe. Designed the same year, 1903, and finished in 1907, it is the work of Robert Curjel and Karl Moser. The tower (figure 5) was borrowed directly from Richardson's Albany City

Hall of 1880 to 1882. Some freedom was taken with the outline of the pyramidal roof and the detailing of the colonnettes, and Richardson's polychromy was not used. Nevertheless, the model remains obvious in this quite literal gesture dating only a few years before German eyes shifted to an American architect two generations younger than Richardson, Frank Lloyd Wright.

In short, Richardsonian influence appeared in Germany during the 1890s and was still noticeable after 1900. The same can be said of the Shingle Style, elements of which can also be found in Germany. For example, in 1890 Hermann Solf designed a large stuccoed house in Grunewald (figure 6), a garden suburb of Berlin. When photographs of it were first published, the accompanying commentary mentioned that it followed English precedent. Another writer, however, pointed out that the cypress shingles on the upper walls and window bays had been brought from America, as had various parts of the heating system. It may be suggested that motifs as well as materials for some of the exterior features, such as the polygonal tower, had been imported from these shores.

In 1900 Joseph Maria Olbrich, who had recently arrived in Darmstadt from Vienna, sketched ideas for the Wilhelm Deiters house (figure 7). This was one of the seven villas he designed for the artists' colony founded by the Grand Duke of Hesse. Deiters was not one of the artists; as secretary and business manager of the colony, he was assigned the last house on the Alexandraweg, at the rear access to the Mathildenhöhe. Olbrich seems to have attempted the suggestion of a gatehouse. Yet there is also something of the Shingle Style, especially in the composition of the turreted corner bay. Olbrich did not travel to the United States until 1904, and does not seem to have been aware of the architecture here until that time. It is quite possible, however, that he knew Solf's Kalisch-Lehmann house and others like it, for he visited Berlin often and later designed two projects for houses in Grunewald.

Another Darmstadt house by Olbrich had progeny of its own in a suburb of Pittsburgh. The Old Heidelberg Apartments of 1905 (figure 8) are the work of Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr., a Pittsburgher whose grandparents were German immigrants. According to James Van Trump, Scheibler never visited Europe; but he did subscribe to German architectural magazines. When a photograph of this building was published in 1908, it was observed that the style was compatible with the new architecture of Austria. Quite specifically, the Old Heidelberg Apartments are derived from Olbrich's house for Hans Christiansen of 1900 to 1901, doubled and modified by Scheibler to accommodate the multiple dwelling units.

There was a building in St. Louis actually designed by Olbrich, although it stood for only a short while. The Fountain Court (figure 9) at the Louisiana Purchase International Exposition of 1904, a small pavilion in the courtyard of the Palace of Varied Industries, consisted of a series of rooms – most of them decorated by

Olbrich — arranged around a quiet pool. The architect stated that he conceived the ensemble as a house for an American patron of the arts. Of course, this was a variation on the theme of the competition for *Ein Haus eines Kunstfreundes*, which had been sponsored by the Darmstadt publisher Alexander Koch in 1901, and for which Olbrich served as a juror. The St. Louis courtyard was decidedly Mediterranean in feeling; but it also owed something to Charles Rennie Mackintosh, who had placed in the 1901 competition. Olbrich won the highest prize in St. Louis for his courtyard and interiors and was elected to corresponding membership in the American Institute of Architects. This success helped to reassure the Germans that they now led the world in the field of the decorative arts, which is exactly what they had set out to prove in 1904. Gustav Stickley featured Olbrich's work in *The Craftsman*, praising its lack of pretension. John Wanamaker was so captivated that he bought several of the rooms and had them shipped to Philadelphia, where they were installed in his department store. The German press hailed this news and assumed that Wanamaker planned to market German wares. Instead the furniture and paneling decorated offices and a conference room until Wanamaker tired of them and had everything carted away.

Another American reaction to Olbrich's Fountain Court was recalled by the late Barry Byrne, who worked for Frank Lloyd Wright at the time of the St. Louis Exposition. Wright explored the fairgrounds, hating most of what he saw. After returning to Chicago, however, he gave his draughtsman a few days off to see the extravaganza for himself. He warned Byrne not to look at anything too closely, except Olbrich's court, where, Wright cautioned, he should study the superb craftsmanship and pay no attention to the style!

When Wright was in Berlin in 1909, the head of the Wasmuth publishing house introduced him as the "Olbrich of America." The gesture must have annoyed Wright. Yet, according to Edgar Kaufmann Jr., he subdued his pride enough to travel to Darmstadt in search of his counterpart, who had died the previous year. More important, however, was the outcome of negotiations with Wasmuth's director: Wright — who as a child had arranged his first geometries with Froebelian kindergarten blocks — now became the new source of architectural material for the company, replacing the late Olbrich, whose drawings had been issued periodically since 1901.

But what about traceable strains of Wright's influence in Germany before the Wasmuth publications of 1910 and 1911? Otto Graf, in *Die vergessene Wagner-schule* (1969), observed a certain hint of Wright in the project for a country house (figure 10) designed by Aloys Ludwig in 1904. The prow of the porch and the long, low lines of its roof recall features of Wright's houses of the late 1890s and the early years of the new century. In addition, the plan of Ludwig's project is similar to the Ward Willits house of 1901 to 1902, and to the second of Wright's designs

for the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1901. When I interviewed Ludwig in 1967, he spoke of his admiration for Wright. Unaware of this 1904 project at the time, I naturally assumed that his acquaintance with the Prairie Houses dated from the appearance of the Wasmuth folio of drawings. After Ludwig's death, however, his son reported finding among his father's possessions a copy of the Chicago Architectural Club Annual of 1902, the controversial one full of Wright's drawings, plans, and photographs. Indeed, European fascination for things Wrightian existed long before 1910.

The period in question can be rounded out, architecturally, with a house (figure 11) by Paul Thiersch, built in Neumark, Germany, about 1912. Directly related to Peter Behrens's houses in Hagen-Eppenhäusen, which were designed when Thiersch was working for Behrens, this building has the stable forms so typical of Behrens's new classicism after *Jugendstil* had become a facile and dangerous thing. But Thiersch's house is even more monumental in feeling, with more pathos, if that is possible. It is also one of many buildings throughout Germany inspired by the early houses of Wright, specifically the William H. Winslow house of 1893. The Winslow house, incidentally, was also influential for the young Walter Gropius, who was another product of Behrens's office. Even Behrens himself managed to reveal some indebtedness to the Chicago architect in his administration building for the Gutehoffnungshütte in Oberhausen of 1921 to 1925.

Turning briefly to painting, it will be remembered that since the 1840s, Düsseldorf had been the mecca for American student-painters. By the time of the Civil War, Munich was the place to go. David Neal, from Lowell, Massachusetts, is known to have been the first American artist to study in the Bavarian capital. Archives of the Munich Academy indicate that he enrolled there in January 1862, at the age of twenty-four. He was a pupil of Carl Piloty, in whose studio Hans Makart, and many others, had been trained. Piloty was a popular success and much sought after as a teacher. Challenging the primacy of neoclassicism in Munich, he had introduced a new sense of color and action. He was unusually devoted to British royal history as a source of subject matter, as can be seen, for example, in his *Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn*. This interest – perhaps encouraged by Schiller's drama or by Swinburne's trilogy about Mary, Queen of Scots – carried over into Neal's work, such as his *First Meeting of Mary Stuart and Rizzio*, of 1876 (figure 12). The theatrical depiction of the queen as she encounters her ill-fated lover at the foot of a marble staircase includes many of the same props and costumes that appeared in Piloty's paintings.

Another of Piloty's American students was Toby Rosenthal, who was born in New Haven and, like Neal, received some early training in San Francisco. Rosenthal entered the Munich Academy in October 1865. His most famous painting, *Elaine* (1873), was shown at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia. Based on

the British legend popularized by Tennyson, it portrayed the maiden who poisoned herself after arranging for her body to be delivered to her inattentive lover. A contemporary reviewer was rather critical of the work:

It is a noble and tragic composition, but so distinctly representative of the Munich School of Painting that it neither seems like a picture to be rightly called a work of American art, nor an illustration of the legendary epoch of Great Britain. The dead girl, with her blonde massiveness, her powerful frame and large jaws, would do very well for a character from the *Nibelung-Lied*, but is less suitable for an illustration of British loveliness.

The melodrama of Elaine, typical of much of what was being done in Munich at the time, is in contrast to the Bavarian genre pictures that Rosenthal, who remained in Germany, painted before his death in 1917. Representative of Rosenthal's intervening period is a painting now in San Francisco, *The Cardinal's Portrait* (figure 13), signed and dated 1896. This anecdotal scene of a venerable churchman faltering in his pose of inspired wisdom, brings to mind what Oscar Wilde once wrote about similar paintings he had encountered: "Their meaning is too obvious, and their method too clearly defined. One exhausts what they have to say in a very short time, and then they become as tedious as one's own relations."

Many of the Americans who went to Munich in the 1870s found their forte in portraiture. J. Frank Currier, born in Boston in 1843, began his studies at the Academy in January 1870. His *Boy with a Ruff*, painted about 1875, shows the influence of Franz von Lenbach, who was then regarded in Munich as the "Prince of Painters." There is not much psychological involvement in this portrait; but it is full of lively brushwork and has a masterful composition. After twenty years in Munich, Currier finally returned to Boston in 1890. However, he longed so for the atmosphere of Munich that he stopped painting and eventually took his own life.

Even more important than Lenbach as an influence on the Americans was the great portraitist and painter of genre Wilhelm Leibl. He did not teach at the Academy; students simply gathered about him in great numbers. In 1867 Leibl traveled to Spain, bringing back a profound enthusiasm for Velázquez. He was also a friend of Gustave Courbet, who visited Bavaria in 1869. Realism was thereafter firmly established in Munich.

A prominent member of the "Leibl Circle" was Frank Duveneck, the first of two remarkable American painters who studied in Munich during the 1870s. Born in Covington, Kentucky, Duveneck entered in the Academy in January 1870. He was officially a pupil of Wilhelm Dietz; but it was the extracurricular contact with Leibl that led to Duveneck's best efforts. His *Portrait of an Old Woman* (1871) reveals an admirable ability to portray character and age, despite the cursory brushstrokes. Duveneck frequently signed his canvases with large red letters, a practice no doubt

prompted by the prevailing enthusiasm for Courbet. However, it was not only the art of the French realist school, and that of Spain, which held sway. Great devotion to the baroque art of the Lowlands also helped make the term "Munich School" synonymous with a richness of dark tones and painterly bravura. Franz Hals, of course, was the paradigm. When Duveneck visited New York in the mid-1870s he made a copy of *Malle Babbe*, Hals's problematic canvas in the Metropolitan Museum.

The *Whistling Boy*, of 1872 (figure 14), is a superb example of Duveneck's color and his broad, energetic approach. John Singer Sargent proclaimed Duveneck "the greatest talent with a brush of his generation." He became an influential teacher in Munich, Venice, and then in Cincinnati.

There are descriptions of how Duveneck sat foursquare at his canvas and worked with gusto and vigor, as though engaged in sport. An image of this is preserved in a painting (figure 15) by his good friend William Merritt Chase, in which Duveneck is seen in his studio, working on *The Turkish Page*, of 1876. Chase also did his own version of this exotic subject, and it provides an interesting comparison of the techniques of these two colleagues.

Chase was the other important American painter to study in Munich during this period, enrolling there in 1872. He later returned to New York, where he was one of the most popular teachers of his time. In the *Studio*, of 1880, is typical of the dark coloration he learned in Munich. Later his friendship with James McNeil Whistler brought more light and purer color into his quasi-impressionist canvases. One can see this familiar mode in Chase's *Open Air Breakfast*, of about 1888, which shows members of his family posed informally in the out-of-doors against the background of a Japanese screen. Although Chase's palette changed remarkably, he never abandoned the spirited manner of applying pigment.

There is a late and unexpected instance of American influence in the arts of Munich at the turn of the century. The successor to Lenbach as the city's *Malerfürst* was Franz von Stuck. In 1902 Stuck painted a double portrait of himself and his wife, whom he had married five years earlier. Mary Stuck was an American by birth; she had married a Munich physician and was widowed. A short while after the Stucks' marriage in 1897, construction of their villa began on a prominence east of the main part of the city, across the Isar River. It was to be the center of artistic life in Munich for many years, and reflected the curious mixture of *Jugendstil* and classicism evident both in Stuck's art and in his person. The verve in this household was largely due to Mary Stuck. It also seems to have been general knowledge in Munich that the sumptuous Doric palace, designed by her new husband, was made possible by the bank account brought into the marriage by this delightful and handsome woman from Brooklyn.



1. Dearborn Street Station, Chicago, 1883-1885. Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz.
 Photograph: Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, Cambridge,
 Massachusetts.



2. Völkerschlacht Monument, near Leipzig, 1898-1913. Bruno Schmitz. Photograph: Franz
 Stödtner, Düsseldorf.



3. Project for the City Hall, Stuttgart, 1895.
Albert F.M. Lange. From *Neubauten und
Concurrenzen* (October 1895). Österreichisches
Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna.



4. Evangelical Church, Cologne-Bayenthal,
1903-1905. Otto March. Photograph: Franz
Stoedtner, Düsseldorf.

5. Tower of the Luther Church, Karlsruhe,
1903-1907. Robert Curjel and Karl Moser.
From *Moderne Bauformen* (April 1908).





6. Kalisch-Lehman House, Berlin-Grünwald, 1890-1891. Hermann Solf. From *Blätter für Architektur und Kunsthandwerk* (August 1891).

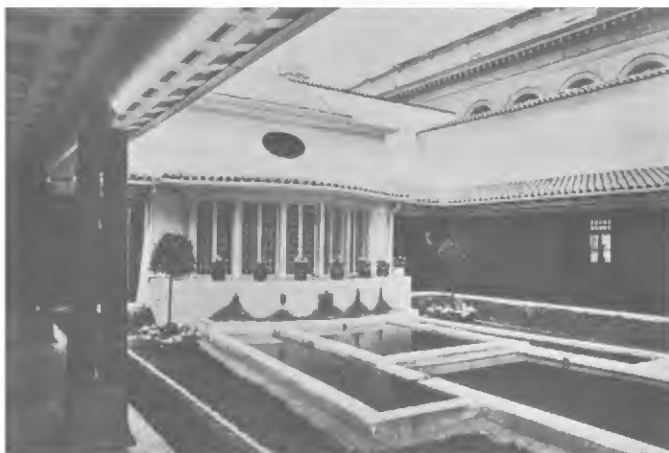


7. Wilhelm Deiters House, Darmstadt, 1900-1901. Joseph M. Olbrich. From *Kunstgewerbeblatt* (November 1900).

8. Old Heidelberg Apartments, Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, 1905. Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr. From *American Architect and Building News* (January 1907).



9. Fountain Court,
Louisiana Purchase
International
Exposition, St. Louis,
1904. Joseph M.
Olbrich. From *The
Craftsman* (August
1904).



10. Project for a country
house, 1904. Aloys
Ludwig. From *Der
Architekt* (1905).



11. Sylva House, Neumark,
about 1912. Paul
Thiersch. From
*Deutsche Kunst und
Dekoration* (June
1914).





12. The First Meeting of Mary Stuart and Rizzio, 1876. David Neal. Oil on canvas. Whereabouts unknown.

13. The Cardinal's Portrait, 1896. Toby Rosenthal. Oil on canvas, 44¼ x 56¼ inches. California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco. Jacob Stern Permanent Loan Collection.





14. Whistling Boy, 1872. Frank Duveneck. Oil on canvas, 28 x 21½ inches. Cincinnati Art Museum. Gift of Frank Duveneck, 1904.196.

15. Duveneck Painting the Turkish Page, 1876. William Merritt Chase. Oil on canvas, 10¼ x 14¼ inches. Cincinnati Art Museum, 1919.79.



The Interplay between American and Japanese Art

It was not unusual, in the beginning of her rapport with America, after Commodore Perry's unsolicited visit in 1853, that Japan, owing to her isolation and impenetrability, was regarded as a unique, romantic, and paradoxical realm — wealthy, warlike, and superstitious. Like another Arcadia, Japan came to embody the mystery and romance of the unknown. Of course, with our mid-century dreams of Manifest Destiny, Japan was considered a backward Oriental domain to be redeemed from paganism by Protestant Christianity and brought into the family of nations by the benefits of Western industrialization and technology. In the decades after Perry's visit, many Americans looked upon Japan with the same indulgence with which they regarded the antebellum South, a civilization of beauty, harmony, and sophistication, a traditional culture nostalgically pleasant to view in retrospect, a beautiful vanishing tradition, which, naturally, had to be brought up to date. This rather patronizing point of view, for a time, gave the smug Westerner the feeling that there was no urgent need to learn from Japan.

As James Bowditch, a former student of mine, has pointed out in his unpublished thesis *The Impact of Japanese Culture on the United States, 1853-1904* (1963), American artists were certainly not so troubled by the paradoxes of Japan as the frustrated missionaries and scientists were; nevertheless, unlike the initial impact of Japanese art on Europe, it was a long time before any real comprehension and adaptation of Japanese forms and techniques appeared in America. Japan, as Lafcadio Hearn discovered, is not an easy place for a foreigner to find total acceptance; but it is a country where the outsider, especially if he shows himself willing to

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learn, can find something beyond the cheap reward of the obvious. To anyone who will take the trouble, Japan is more than an irrelevant curiosity. In the hundred years that interest us, Japan enlarged the American mind.

The history of Japanese influence in America has been so fully and admirably related by Clay Lancaster, especially in *The Japanese Influence in America* (1963), his survey of the assimilation of elements of Japanese decoration into architecture, that little remains to be said about this romantic attempt to capture the flavor of the never-never land of Japan in the decades of industrial and material growth. This phase of Japanese influence included the actual construction of Japanese buildings at the exhibitions of 1876 and 1893 and the incrustation of otherwise completely Western rooms with an exotic veneer of grotesque Japanese decoration, the Oriental equivalent of the Turkish corner. These Japanese rooms, and later supposedly Japanese houses, were, as Lancaster points out, escapes and status symbols, and at the same time the prelude to the creative adoption of the principles of Japanese structure in the Chicago school. As will be seen, something of the same progression from the superficial borrowing of Oriental motifs and formal design in painting was followed belatedly by the understanding of the underlying aesthetic and spiritual qualities of Oriental art and their creative adoption by American artists.

I have often wondered just how much effect the showing of Japanese artifacts at the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition had on American taste, beyond the superficial titillation of novelty and the exotic. I recall that among the delights of my childhood were visits to Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park, a splendid relic of the Centennial, which still housed some of the treasures that delighted the public in 1876 (figure 1). Among the Japanese remainders, tastefully installed beside the alabaster replicas of the Taj Mahal and the Tower of Pisa, were assortments of elaborate Satsuma porcelains, bronze cranes, and giant vases, and, best of all, a wooden statue of a fisherman with real clothes, real hair, porcelain eyes and teeth. Originally there were screens as well, and on the grounds Japanese buildings constructed by imported workmen. The last of these, a little gate on the East River Drive, was destroyed by fire in 1955.

The Japanese exports to the fairs, beginning with the Centennial, were hardly more than curios. No prints were sent in 1876, owing to the prejudice of Japanese connoisseurs against the Ukiyo-e, the prints of the "floating world." The American public admired the marvels I have described, as well as richly embroidered screens and an engaging panel representing insects enacting a matsuri, a festival procession. What amusing and rather fey people the Japanese were, with their interest in little things in nature — but nothing to be taken seriously! The exports to other exhibitions and to the ever increasing number of Oriental curio shops were of the same order, made to appeal to the taste for the elaborate and the quaint. Only with the

Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago did the Japanese send a collection of paintings that could be rated as works of art. They were the productions of leading contemporary artists, including a tigress by Kishi Chikudō, the grandson of the famous animalier Ganshu (figure 2). There was a story current at the time that the artist had discarded four versions of the subject before producing the tigress actually exhibited, and that the strain and anxiety were such that the poor man became deranged to the extent of imagining himself a tiger, certainly the finest example of the identification of subject with object.

It should be noted that, of all the Japanese wares exported to the exhibitions, lacquer, swords, bronzes, silks, and porcelains were considered the most worthy of attention; and so, at the time of the Philadelphia Centennial, Japanese influence took a slight hold on the industrial arts: dinner sets with Japanese designs made their appearance; and two years later, at the Paris Exposition of 1878, Tiffany and Company of New York sent wares decorated with Japanese designs, fish, butterflies, crabs, herons, irises, garlands, and so on, partly engraved and partly in relief. These pieces must certainly have been the American equivalent of the imitations of Japanese metalwork that had appeared in Paris somewhat earlier.

Of course America had been introduced already to the mysterious novelty of Japanese art by the reports of Commodore Perry's expedition and by one of the first serious books on Japanese art, *A Glimpse at the Art of Japan*, by none other than James Jackson Jarves, in 1876. Jarves's information was based almost entirely on the prints in an edition of Hokusai's *Mangwa* and what information he was able to pick up from Italian students of Japanese religion and customs in Florence (figure 3). In the welter of Jarves's moralizing and misinformation it is evident that the writer admired this new world extravagantly. He was completely aware of the effectiveness of the economy of statement and the beauty of the flat image, or what he described as an "elegant modeling." "Any fair collection of Japanese decorative art," he said, "makes the average European look distorted, pretentious, or pitiful." Another quotation will illustrate how intuitively he sensed the fundamental creative principles of the Orient: "The absorption of the artist in his object communicates itself to the spectator. Be it a mere blade of grass, bit of vine, branch of blossoms . . . a shrub bowed down by the wind, bird pluming itself or sweeping on its prey . . . in short any natural object under any condition of its existence, a Japanese draughtsman is sure to give it genuine characterization and make it appear at its best." He was also aware that "Japanese art as a whole is making a deep impression, as it deserved, on the artistic mind of Europe." As we shall see, it would eventually influence American art as well. Rather inexplicably Jarves concluded: "Who knows, but that Japanese art has now fulfilled its purpose, except to die or be transformed into something entirely different."

It is necessary to make only a brief reference to Western influence on Japan, for there is very little evidence as far as America is concerned. In the early nineteenth century the Japanese artist Shiba Kokan lamented his lot at being a Japanese painter and not the master of the realistic chromo technique that he admired in the second-rate works imported by the Dutch to Nagasaki. He might have realized his ambition had he lived to meet a Mrs. Raphael Scheyer, who, as early as 1863, was the publisher of the American newspaper *The Japan Express*. This lady, also an amateur painter, was besieged by Japanese artists pleading to be instructed in the wonderful ways of Occidental art. She obligingly supplied them with sailcloth, brushes, paints, and a few lessons, to become the patron of the first generation of Japanese artists in the Western style. The rest of the story of the Westernization of Japanese art belongs more to the ateliers of Paris than to any contribution from North America.

Turning to the Orientalization of American artists, we must begin with the familiar story of Whistler's conversion to Oriental, specifically Japanese, forms. According to legend, the discovery of Japanese art by artists in Paris began with the acquisition of a copy of Hokusai's *Mangwa* by a Monsieur Bracquemond in 1858. The International Exposition of 1862 in London marked the first large public showing of imports from Japan, and the opening of La Porte Chinoise in Paris made prints, ceramics, and other artifacts available to Whistler and his contemporaries. Whistler's serious preoccupation with Oriental forms appears to have begun in 1863 with his introduction to Rossetti and their rivalry in collecting Chinese blue-and-white porcelain (Rossetti always called it "blue") and Japanese prints. One of the first results was the *Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (figure 4), in which the pose is certainly taken from Utamaro (figure 5) or Kiyonaga. Another example of this phase of Whistler's Orientalization is in what the artist called *Lange Lijzen*: willowy ladies in kimonos surrounded by a vast assortment of fans and blue-and-white — in other words, more a display of Oriental accessories than a true comprehension of the spirit of the Far East. It is only in *The Balcony* that Whistler begins to show the first understanding of that combination of simplicity, reverence for nature, subdued palette, and suggested, rather than specific, description fundamental to Oriental design. The figures are silhouettes in costume, and the background in its hazy emptiness already suggests the mystery and selectivity of his Nocturnes.

Whistler's own definition of his Nocturnes is so well known that it scarcely needs a full quotation here. They were his ultimate statement in the suppression of content, arrangements in line, form, and color with a conscious transposition of reality for the sake of both decorative and emotional expressiveness. The Nocturnes are also Whistler's closest approximation of an Oriental point of view in his effort to suggest, as Sadakichi Hartmann noted in *The Whistler Book* (1910), some senti-

ment beyond what is conveyed by the facts represented, in other words something like the incompleteness and suggestion of the haiku. In the Nocturnes Whistler is more consciously indebted to compositions drawn from Hiroshige. A version of his famous Battersea Bridge motif in the Freer Gallery (figure 6) closely follows the design of Hiroshige's print of Evening at the Ryōgoku Bridge (figure 7). The final, and much more original, adaptation of this Ukiyo-e motif is to be seen in the famous Battersea Bridge in the Tate Gallery. The placing of the flat silhouette of the bridge against the night and the asymmetrical balance in the shower of rockets in the upper right-hand corner are Whistler's transposition of Hiroshige, as is the painting of the scene in extremely limited range of color and value contrasts. Specifically, in his elusive light and the sense of a veil of atmosphere Whistler has been most successful in conveying the mystery of the fall of day that informs the Japanese print. The inspiration for these projects was obviously prints in Whistler's possession or in the collection of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Nocturnes, in their elimination of the unessential and suggestion of spiritual depth and selectivity are far more eloquent illustrations of Whistler's grasp of Oriental principles than the famous Peacock Room in the Freer Gallery, which seems like a rather boisterous and obvious parade of Oriental design.

It has often been inferred – for example, by Albert TenEyck Gardner in his *Winslow Homer* (1961) – that Homer was aware of the Japanese style through having seen prints and perhaps paintings at the Paris Exposition of 1867. His playful exercises in an Oriental key, like the International Teaparty (figure 8) and The Valentine (figure 9), certainly show he must have been acquainted with prints by Kiyonaga, who, together with Hiroshige, was perhaps the most influential of the Ukiyo-e artists in the West. In works like The Fox Hunt (figure 10), so often mentioned as an illustration of Japanese influence, we are reminded not so much of prints as of a majestic screen by Okyō. Although the occult balance of forms and their flatness are undoubtedly an arrangement of Japanese design, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact Japanese source. It is better to conclude that Homer had so absorbed the basic ideas of the Oriental artist and his ability to enter into the specific life and movement of birds and beasts that Homer was able to create his own originality in an Oriental idiom. His success in what an Oriental critic would describe as the appropriate life-movement and spirit in his painting of the crows in The Fox Hunt is reinforced by an anecdote recorded by Philip C. Bean in *Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck* (1966): when Homer approached one of his boon companions for a criticism of the painting, the latter replied, "Hell, Win, them ain't crows, Win," and was only satisfied by the final version, which was the result of Homer's sketching living birds on the wing, rather than the dead specimens he had originally propped up for the purpose.

Homer's wonderful gift of selective realism, so suggestive of the direct reportorial prose of Stephen Crane, seems to have been refined even further by an understanding, rather than a copying, of the Oriental feeling for the virtues of simplicity, balance, and overflowing emptiness in such late works as *A View of the Ramparts of Morro Castle*.

Certainly not every artist of this memorable generation was so successful in borrowing from the Far East. For example, a French critic writing on John Singer Sargent's notorious *Madame Gautreau* in *L'Illustration* in 1864 said: "Two years ago one spoke of Goya in connection with Sargent: We don't know where he's been in the meantime [Sargent had been in Spain], but one might say he has been wasting his time looking at Japanese prints." Looking at the picture now, one finds that the flat elongation and distortion of *Madame Gautreau's* elegant anatomy seems more like Sargent's memory of Ingres than Utamaro.

Mary Cassatt, working in the shadow of Degas and Manet, occasionally expressed herself in the Japanese mode. Her thoroughly informal and sketchy little painting, *La Toilette*, a girl at a dressing table, with its flatness and linear treatment, was probably inspired by one of the prints of the beauties of the Yoshiwara by Utamaro, a superficial exercise. It does not seem to have profoundly affected Cassatt's style, unless we wish to think that every canvas she painted in which the figures are cut off by the frame, where line prevails over modeling, offers unmistakable evidence of Japanese influence.

Meanwhile John La Farge had produced a summary history of Japanese art, and occasional examples of his work, like the fragment of stained glass with peonies in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, show an attempt to translate an Oriental theme into Western terms.

For a number of reasons, the understanding of Japanese art was growing, even although as late as 1890, a critic writing in *The Chatauquan* complained: "Today the knowledge of Japanese art is confused and the prejudice towards it is very strong . . . We refuse to see [in these pictures] the results of a superior art."

One of these reasons was the serious collecting of Japanese art as an influence on American taste. This subject has been treated so often that it needs only a brief summary here. Edward Morse, who was in Japan from 1877 to 1883, assembled a vast collection of Japanese ceramics, which formed the core of the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He was joined in 1878 by Ernest Fenollosa, who was perhaps the most important of these pioneers in introducing true Japanese taste to America, not only by forming a magnificent collection for the Museum of Fine Arts, but also in publishing his systematic treatment of Eastern art, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*. Both Fenollosa and Morse were among the early curators of the Asiatic Department in Boston. They were succeeded in 1896 by Arthur

Wesley Dow, who provided the first intelligent introduction of the principles of Oriental art for Western painters with the publication of his *Composition* in 1896.

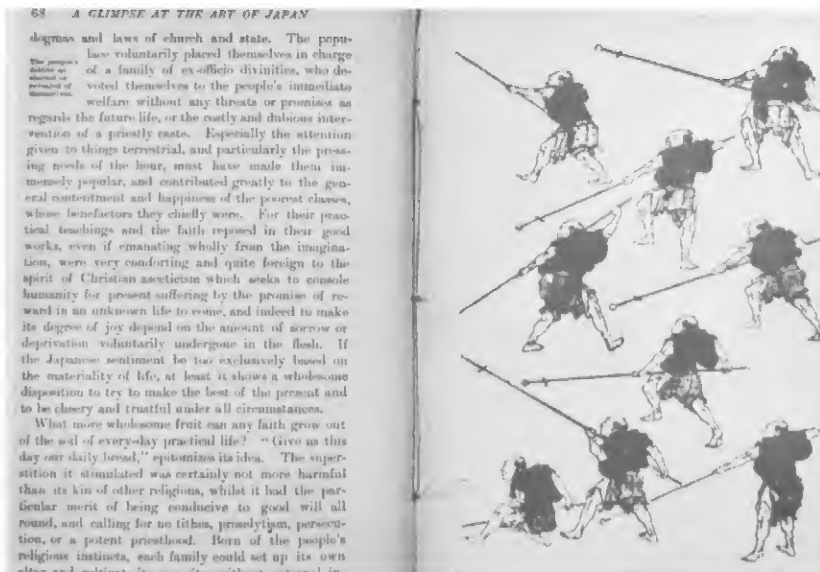
Many of these pioneers in Japanese studies, trying to probe the mystery of the unknown Japan, a mystery deepened by the intuitive secretiveness of the Japanese and the barriers of language, sought to prove to themselves that the culture of Japan was not entirely inscrutable or completely removed from the laws of evolution as applied to Western civilization. Percy Lowell, the astronomer, believed that he had solved all these mysteries in a residence of less than a year and then turned his attention to life on Mars. Fenollosa, Lafcadio Hearn, and William Sturgis Bigelow tried to absorb themselves in the understanding of Japanese culture and religion for years, but we cannot believe that any of them ever saw the face of Buddha. It was inevitable that in this period, when Japan was still very much a secret realm, they all remained outsiders: knowledgeable, receptive, and perceptive aliens.

The growth in the comprehension of Japanese forms from the later nineteenth to the twentieth century is not unlike the change that took place in understanding the use of classical motifs in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, beginning with the employment of Greco-Roman designs as a veneer for medieval structures, to building according to classical principles of design. This was, in other words, a progression from superficial quotations from the antique to the creation of a new classical art in classical terms in the High Renaissance.

Something of the same progression from the superficial borrowing of Oriental motifs and formal designs in the work of a few artists like Whistler and Homer is followed very belatedly in the twentieth century by the understanding of the underlying aesthetic and spiritual qualities of Oriental art and their creative adoption by American artists like Tobey, Graves, and Kline.



1. Japanese exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. From C.B. Norton's *Treasures of Art, Industry, and Manufacture Represented in the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876*, Philadelphia, 1877-1878.
2. Tigress by Kishi Chikudō shown at the Columbia Exposition in Chicago, 1893. Whereabouts unknown.



3. Pages from J.J. Jarves's *A Glimpse at the Art of Japan*, 1876, with an illustration of a page from Hokusai's *Mangwa*.



4. **Rose and Silver: La princesse du pays de la porcelaine**, 1864. J.A. McN. Whistler. Oil on canvas, 78¼ x 45¼ inches. Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 03.91.
5. **Courtesans**. Kitagawa Utamaro. Woodcut, 20 x 8⅞ inches. Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Duel Collection, 1933.4.603.



6. **Nocturne: Battersea Bridge.** J.A. McN. Whistler. Pastel on paper, 7¼ x 11½ inches. Butterfly signature. Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 04.64.



7. **Fireworks at Ryōgoku Bridge, 1854.** Andō Hiroshige. Woodcut, 8¾ x 13½ inches. Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Duel Collection, 1933.4.201.



8. **The International Teaparty.** Winslow Homer. Watercolor. The Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, New York, 1912.12.269.

10. **The Fox Hunt, 1893.** Winslow Homer. Oil on canvas, 38 x 68 inches. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Temple Fund Purchase, 1894.

9. St. Valentine's Day, the Old Story in All Lands. Winslow Homer. Wood engraving from *Harpers Weekly*, February 22, 1868. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 28.111.3 (2).



American Art and the Urban Fair

The major American fairs of the nineteenth century – Philadelphia, 1876; Chicago, 1893; St. Louis, 1904; and San Francisco, 1915 (a fair that really belonged to the nineteenth century in spite of its date) – have all been studied at length in terms of their architecture for the obvious reason that many of their buildings long survived their closing. Some of these buildings, indeed, are still in existence, and others, even though they may have been destroyed years ago, are readily visible in photographs. Architecture, however, was not the only thing of artistic importance that was offered at these fairs and at the less spectacular but far more frequent industrial expositions that took place in many cities throughout the country and the century. There were exhibitions of painting and sculpture at all of them, and these exhibitions were the forerunners of the art museums and the art trade of the present day in every city in which they occurred. But they have been strangely neglected by art historians; indeed, so far as I know, the only historian who has even touched on them is Lillian Miller, in her excellent book *Patrons and Patriotism* (1966).

A little known but highly significant case in point is that of the annual trade fair of the American Institute of the City of New York. The American Institute of the City of New York was a protectionist outfit; it was founded in 1828, and it is still listed in the New York telephone book, although it does not seem to be very active nowadays. It was lively enough in 1928, when *The New York Times*, in reviewing its century of existence, credited it with being the first organization to grant recognition to the Bell telephone, the Singer sewing machine, the Hoe rotary press, and

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the Colt revolver. But the *Times* did not record the fact that the American Institute of the City of New York was also the first organization to confer a prize on the painter William Sidney Mount. In so doing, the Institute launched his career and shaped it in the direction it was to follow ever afterward.

The report of the third annual fair of the American Institute, held in October 1830, contained, as its title page put it, "a list of premiums and a catalogue of all the articles exhibited, by whom made and sold, with the duties imposed on similar imported commodities." The catalogue lists all manner of things: cottons, silks, woolens, ironmongery, hardware, hats, pianos, shoes – and works of art. The first premium for art went to William Sidney Mount "for a Painting, representing a rustic dance." The second premium for art was awarded "J. Quidor, for a Painting, Brom Bones and the Schoolmaster, from Irving's *Sketchbook*." The third premium was given to an artist called Bourne for Scenery in the Rocky Mountains. There were also prizes for "John H. J. Browere" (sic) and his son, Albertus, for sculpture of various kinds, and honorable mentions for "plain and ornamental Penmanship," for "a handsome Pen-drawing of the Tomb of Archimedes" by one Charles Edwards, and for "ingenious and beautiful specimens of fancy, transparent, weather-proof Sign Cuttings."

Among the six major prizes they had to award, the unnamed jurors of this exhibition granted four to artists who today are regarded as among the leading figures of their time – Mount, Quidor, and the two Broweres; Mount, Quidor, and Albertus Browere are represented in the Metropolitan Museum's centennial exhibition "Nineteenth-Century America," and John Browere might well have been. The effect of these awards on Quidor and the Broweres was doubtless pleasant, but it was not especially far-reaching; the effect on Mount, however, was crucial.

The Rustic Dance (figure 1) – or, to quote its full title, *The Rustic Dance After a Sleigh Ride* – was the first work of Mount to deal with a native American theme. He had been painting for only two years and had done only two other genre pictures, *Girl at the Well* and *Girl Reading a Love Letter*, neither of which meant anything in terms of cultural nationalism. The rural, vernacular implications of *The Rustic Dance*, on the other hand, were entirely in tune with the protectionist, exclusionist, buy-American attitude of the American Institute of the City of New York, and that is why it won the Institute's first prize. The painting was a runaway success; it was, indeed, so popular that a poem about it was printed in a broadside and hawked about the streets of New York. And as a result, William Sidney Mount became a specialist in rural genre and stayed with that form of expression for the remaining thirty-eight years of his life.

As Donald Keyes has shown in the *Art Quarterly* for Autumn 1969, *The Rustic Dance* is deeply indebted to a painting by John Lewis Krimmel, *geboren Johann*

Ludwig Krimmel, who painted genre in and around Philadelphia from 1810 to his death eleven years later; he had come from Germany and his style was a vernacularized German rococo. It is equally indebted to Benjamin West and his neoclassical “bridge formula,” whereby the central incident in an anecdotal painting takes place in the center, with empty space between us, the spectators, and it, and with supporting figures coming down into each of the lower corners of the composition. So this is the way to produce a native American art: start from a hearty German tradition of the painting of everyday life and add to this a compositional formula derived from neoclassicism, which was an international mode. Next, you add the enthusiasm of ironmongers and woolen weavers, who might not know much about art but who knew what they liked, and a thoroughly American style emerges.

Here, then, is an instance wherein a trade fair played a major part in the career of an American artist because all the circumstances were right. Now I want to go to the opposite extreme, with an example of the way in which an artist could be completely misunderstood by those – or some of those – who became acquainted with his work through a trade fair. The artist was William Michael Harnett, the year was 1887, and the trade fair was the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition. Harnett had just come back from Europe, bringing with him his painting *The Old Violin*, and he had sent it out to Minneapolis for a showing. And this is how the Reverend Doctor F. T. Gates of Central Baptist Church in Minneapolis reacted to it in a sermon he preached on the subject, as reported by the *Minneapolis Tribune*:

You will have to look long and closely and from different angles to assure yourself that this is a painting at all, and not a real violin hung on a pair of old wooden shutters with a broken hinge. In Philadelphia they employed a policeman to keep people from trying to settle the matter by putting their hands on it. Here the frame is set in a glass case. The delineation is perfect, the deception complete. And yet that picture is a specimen of the humblest function of the art of painting. The picture conveys no worthy thought or emotion. It is simply a trick. The thought in the mind of the artist is simply “Only see how I can deceive you.” “Just see me do it.” There is nothing whatever in the picture to please or instruct or elevate you. It is nothing but an anonymous old fiddle. The purpose of the painting is just nothing else in the world than to make you admire the man who could depict so vividly. All the accessories of the picture – the rusty hinges, the cracks in the board, the ring and staple, the tacks, the printed slip, the crumpled envelope – are arranged with the single design of rendering the ocular deception perfect. The picture is unworthy, because its purpose is low and selfish. It is a mere piece of legerdemain.

Dr. Gates affords us an insight into one nineteenth-century American attitude toward art that the circumstances of the fair brought forth with exceptional precision and clarity: art must uplift the soul of man. And in tracking works of art through fairs in general one discovers other important insights into nineteenth-century American taste.

The annual trade display of the American Institute of New York and the annual Industrial Exposition held in Minneapolis were minor events compared to the great glamour shows they called world's fairs. The first of these, the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876, left behind one of the most remarkable monuments of its type in existence. I refer to a book called *Masterpieces of the United States International Exposition* — that was the official name of the Philadelphia Centennial fair. It is in three enormous volumes, each running to about 400 pages, and very large and generous pages they are.

The first volume, on the fine arts at the exposition, is by Edward Strahan, whose real name was Earl Shinn. The second volume was on the industrial arts, and its author was Walter Smith. Joseph Wilson completed the trio with a volume on science and mechanics. In turning to some examples from these volumes, I am not attempting a survey of or a reflection upon what was shown at the Centennial; I am surveying and reflecting upon what was picked out for special emphasis in a popular book of the period on the Centennial, and that is not the same thing at all.

I start with a painting by a British artist named F. Holl entitled *The Lord Gave, and the Lord Hath Taken Away, Blessed Be the Name of the Lord* (figure 2). Concerning this Mr. Strahan observes in part:

We share in the first meal which unites a humble family after some awful bereavement. The watchers who have taken their turns at the sick couch are released now; their faithful task is over, the household whose regular ways have been overturned by the malady has come back to its wonted course again, and the pious nurses have no cares to prevent them from meeting at the board as of old. Is there anything more dreadful than that first meal after a funeral? The mockery of leisure and ease — the sorrowful, decorous regularity of the repast — the security from those hindrances and interruptions that so long have marred the order of the attendance — these improvements are here indeed for what they are worth; but where is the tender hand that was wont to break the bread for the household? Where are the lips that used to breathe forth the humble grace before meat? It is the very emptiness of a once cheerful form — the bitterness of meat eaten with tears. The frugal board is neat and pleasant —

“But oh for the touch of a vanished hand

And the sound of a voice that is still!”

In Mr. Holl's picture we see this ghastly, unnatural decorum of the table spread with funeral bakemeats; the wan woman beside it, whose hollow eyes and tear-worn cheeks tell of faithful watching for many a weary a night, is neat with the miserable neatness of the funeral evening.

He goes on that way for five pages, partly because he has five pages to fill; this is a big book. But that is by no means all there is to it. The significant thing here is that necrophiliac strain, that emphasis on death in every conceivable form, which runs all the way through the American popular arts of the middle and late nineteenth century. The songs of Stephen Foster and his school are full of it. Poe gave

voice to it in poems like "Annabel Lee" and "The Raven." And why did people go to see *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Not because it was a great tract against slavery; they went to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to see Little Eva die and go to Heaven. Even so cheerful a painter as William Sidney Mount had repeated brushes with the death customs of his period in the form of commissions to paint portraits of the recently deceased. He did not like these commissions, constantly grumbled about them, but always accepted them.

Strahan's selection among the paintings at the Centennial repeatedly reveals this death-fascination; it is scarcely too much to say that his is a book about death in the form of pictures. And while our taste is doubtless just as fallible and just as strongly conditioned by the general tone of a period as his, it is astonishing and a little frightening to realize that nearly all the artists with whom he deals are totally forgotten today. Only Albert Bierstadt, among those he discusses at length, retains a shred of reputation in our own time.

The main thing one takes away from Walter Smith's volume on the decorative arts is the irony of his constant praise for the simplicity and restraint of objects that to the modern eye seem ludicrously overloaded with fancywork. Mr. Smith assures us that an Eastlake-style organ by Mason and Hamlin (figure 3) "is free from all the abortions in the shape of ornament with which many instruments are disfigured," but it is actually so heavily ornamented that one wonders how anyone could ever have gotten to the keyboard to play it. "Honesty in construction, fitness of ornament and material, and decorative subordination" are the terms with which Smith praises a chandelier by Cornelius and Sons (figure 4), though it seems to us wildly exuberant. At times in reading Smith one seems to be studying a modern book, full of the ideas of contemporary constructivists and functionalists, while the works to which this terminology is applied are of the stickiest Victorian variety. But my favorite object in the industrial arts section is one about which Smith says very little. It is a chimney-piece in the form of a hand-carved ruin by an artist identified only as Signor Luigi (figure 5). It really belongs to the late eighteenth century, to the era of Strawberry Hill, when artificial, hand-made ruins were all the rage, but here it is a hundred years later at the Philadelphia Centennial. One wonders what the large blank area in its middle was intended for. Perhaps a mirror, perhaps a picture. But whatever function this object could have served is totally subordinated to its romantic decoration.

There were fourteen acres of machinery on exhibit at the Centennial, and they were all run by one enormous engine (figure 6), designed by George Corliss of Providence. The Corliss engine was a favorite icon of the Philadelphia fair, and it calls to mind a passage in one of the lectures of Oscar Wilde, in *Impressions of America* (1906):

There is no country in the world where machinery is so lovely as in America. I have always wished to believe that the line of strength and the line of beauty are one. That wish was realized when I contemplated American machinery. It was not until I had seen the waterworks at Chicago that I realized the wonders of machinery; the rise and fall of the steel rods, the symmetrical motion of great wheels is the most beautiful rhythmic thing I have ever seen.

It is highly significant that it took an English aesthete to appreciate the grandeur of American machinery. How often has major American expression in the arts or some other aspect of civilization had its first important recognition abroad? Very often, to be sure, our best expressions have won no response elsewhere; almost as often, however, the poetry of a Whitman or a Poe has achieved its first audience in foreign countries; and many American critics have yet to catch up with Baudelaire's appreciation of George Catlin, published in 1846. Very frequently, European esteem for American phenomena has fed back into America, and American reputations and American understanding have come about as a result.

The machinery at the Centennial directly predicts much modern art. The double turbine waterwheel by Pool and Hunt (figure 7) and the blast engine by I. P. Morris and Company (figure 8) would have delighted the soul of Charles Sheeler, and the car-wheel boring mill by William Sellers and Company (figure 9) reminds one of the large "cubis" of David Smith, who subscribed to a personal mystique of the iron foundry and did some of the best work of his life in a place of that kind at Voltri, in Italy.

In recent years there has been heavy emphasis on certain historic institutions of art in this country, especially the Art-Union. That is all to the good. The Art-Union was important, but other institutions, especially our urban fairs, also invite searching examination as we pursue our efforts to understand what American civilization is all about. The records of these fairs are a rich resource for information about the spread of art in many parts of this country, but very little has been made of them. Fairs are also a laboratory for the examination of the central issue of our entire cultural history, the vernacular versus the academic, and they demonstrate very clearly the impact of political and economic forces on the formation and reception of art in our society.



1. **Rustic Dance After a Sleigh Ride, 1830. William Sidney Mount.** Oil on canvas, 22 x 27¼ inches. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, M. & M. Karolik Collection, 48.458



2. **The Lord Gave, and the Lord Hath Taken Away. Engraving after a painting by F. Holl.** From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 1, by Edward Strahan, Philadelphia, 1876.



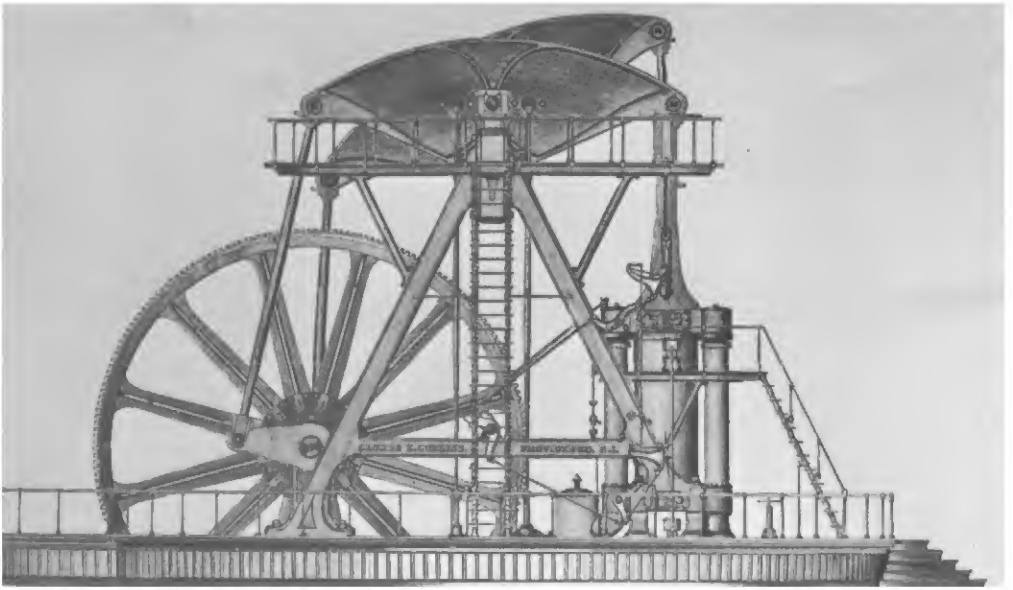
3. Organ. Mason and Hamlin. From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 2, by Walter Smith.



5. Chimney-piece. From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 2.

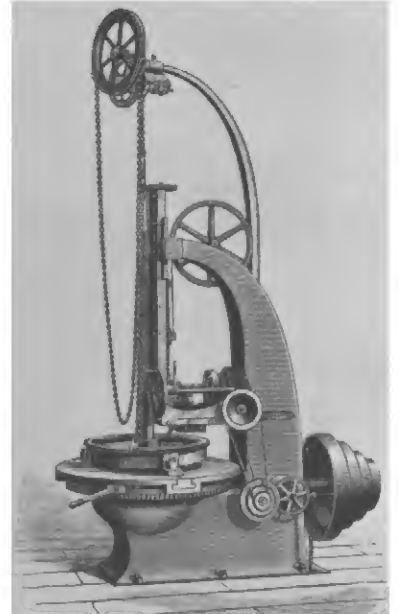


4. Chandelier. Cornelius and Sons. From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 2.



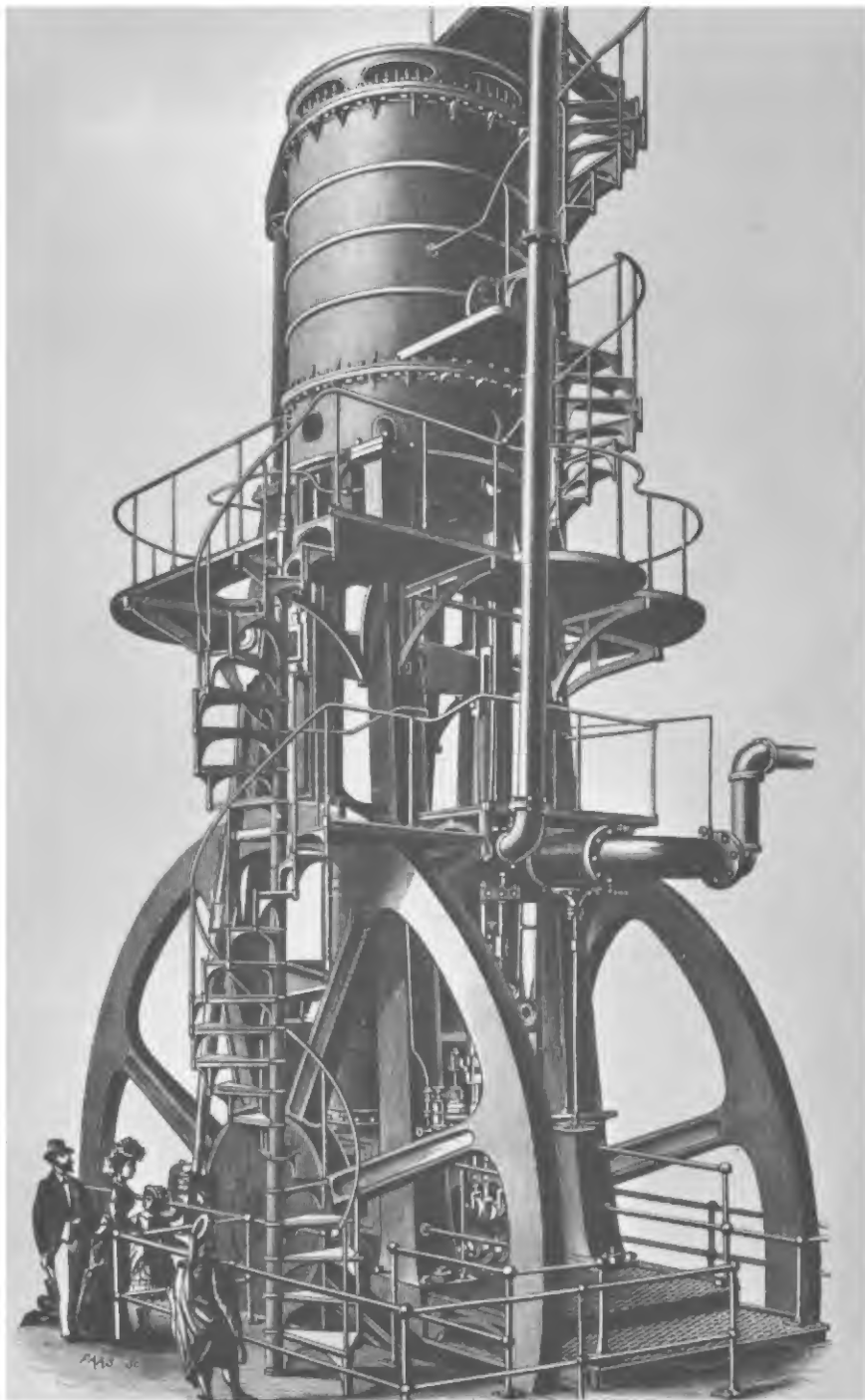
6. Engine. George Corliss. From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 3, by Joseph Wilson.

7. Turbine waterwheel. Pool and Hunt. From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 3.



9. Car-wheel boring mill. William Sellers and Company. From *Masterpieces of Centennial Exposition*, vol. 3.

8. Blast Engine. I. P. Morris and Company. From *Masterpieces of the Centennial Exposition*, vol. 3.



How a Few Artists Wormed Their Way in the Course of a Century into the Confidence of a Small Percentage of Their Compatriots

As the nineteenth century opened, the artist in America was scarcely more than a limner, and he was regarded by his contemporaries with the same kind of disdain that they felt toward actors. They were surely not gentlemen and certainly not socially acceptable in the homes of the pious, the rich, and the influential. By the end of the century, their position and their posture had become quite radically different. When many of them gathered to create the stupendous spectacle of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, they honestly believed that they were exceedingly important people. They had, moreover, convinced a good many non-artists that perhaps they had some social uses in spite of everything — in spite of their manners, their morals, and their ridiculous concern with noncommercial enterprise. It was no mean accomplishment, as I hope to demonstrate.

On July 10, 1804 a sheet called the *New York Commercial Advertiser* treated its readers to a slight lecture on art. A critic who used the pseudonym Clio tried to put as good a face as possible on public indifference by heading his article “Progress in Art,” but what he had to say hardly supported his optimism. He wrote: “No one who has a partial knowledge of our history will be surprised to hear that the arts are in their infancy among us. They have taken a goodly nap on this side [of] the water.” He concluded: “As it respects learning and wealth, we are fast emerging from darkness to light. From this happy circumstance it may fairly be calculated that our progress in the arts will be in just proportion to our advancement in the sciences.” But the “goodly nap” was far from over in 1804 and attempts to shake the public awake to the arts had met with a discouraging degree of success. In

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Philadelphia Charles Willson Peale's attempts to run a museum of portraits and curiosities of nature, including his mastodon skeleton, had failed after six years; it was largely ignored by his neighbors.

After the closing of his museum, Peale wrote to his old friend and master Benjamin West, in London: "I now find it necessary to travel to get business in the portrait line to maintain my family, which is not small." And he added: "I mention these things to show you that the state of the arts in America is not very favorable at the moment."

Peale's patience was sorely tried when he set out to organize the artists of Philadelphia in an association to support an art school and a gallery. He not only had to contend with public indifference, but with squabbling artists who vilified each other in the public press. When he was finally successful in establishing the Columbianum, also called the Association of Philadelphia Artists, it broke apart on the reefs of prudery. Not only was his proposal that they attend life classes to draw from the nude greeted with statements from young gentlemen that such a thing was, in their words, "inconsistent and indecent," but when he posed himself for his class, the students walked out and the school collapsed. Later he wrote rather touchingly to his friend Thomas Jefferson: "I endeavored for some time to keep it alive as a tender and beautiful plant."

It took nerve and a certain gall to set out to be an artist at the beginning of the century. When Trumbull was a student at Harvard his tutor wrote the young man's father: "I find he has a natural genius and disposition for limning. A knowledge of that art will probably be of no use to him." And Trumbull's father wrote back: "I am sensible of his natural genius and inclination for limning; an art I have frequently told him will be of no use to him." The father of another artist who went to college to study law, the portraitist Matthew Harris Jouett, wrote to a friend: "I sent Matthew to college to make a gentleman of him, and he has turned out to be nothing but a damned sign painter."

The position of the arts, and hence of the artist, was not merely looked on as lowly, it was considered corrupting. When the Pennsylvania Academy held its first exhibition in 1811, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the famous architect, felt called upon to say: "At the opening of this infant institution, instruction . . . is less necessary than the labour of proving that these arts have not an injurious effect, but a beneficial effect on the morals, and even the liberties of our country." And he reminded his audience: "We cannot disguise from ourselves that far from enjoying the support of the general voice of the people, our national prejudices are unfavorable to the fine arts."

The very fact that an Academy had been founded at all in Philadelphia was encouraging, although Peale thought the amount of money squandered on its build-

ing was preposterous. Indeed there was already an Academy in New York, a shaky institution organized by a group of "gentlemen of taste and fortune," as Trumbull called them, at the urging of the diplomatist Robert H. Livingston. Its declared purpose was to improve the public taste, and its founders believed that this could be achieved by importing plaster casts of classical statues from the Louvre and inviting the public to look at them. The Academy in Philadelphia had followed this lead, and according to one historian, "the managers were obliged to set apart one day each week for female visitors, when the nude figures were swathed from head to foot in muslin sheets." When Mrs. Frances Trollope visited Philadelphia in June 1830, she felt constrained to report in her *Domestic Manners of the Americans* that she was revolted at "the disgusting depravity which had led some of the visitors to mark and deface the casts in the most indecent and shameless manner," and she blamed this on "the coarse-minded custom which sends alternate groups of males and females into the room."

Mrs. Trollope's observation, however, on the status of the artist is more to the point, although it is characteristically condescending. "With regard to the fine arts," she wrote, "their paintings, I think, are quite good, or rather better than might be expected from the patronage they receive; the wonder is that any man can be found with courage enough to devote himself to a profession in which he has so little chance of finding a maintenance. The trade of carpenter opens an infinitely better prospect."

Just a year later Samuel F. B. Morse threw down his brushes in disgust and wrote to his friend DeWitt H. Bloodgood: "No, Bloodgood, my profession is that of a beggar, it exists on charity . . . A profession so precarious as mine . . . is looked at by fathers, brothers, &c. with suspicion, and objections are, of course, made to my family connection with it . . . I assure you, Bloodgood, that neither talent, nor character, nor education, nor standing in society, will avail an artist against the secret distrust of him from the precariousness of his professional labor."

In some respects Morse's career — his prospects, his concern with his profession and with his fellow professionals, his attempts to improve their lot along with his own — summarizes better than the experience of any of his contemporaries what the relation between the artist and the public was in the early days of the century. Like Peale, Trumbull, and Allston, Morse went as a young man to study in Benjamin West's studio in London; and like these men of an earlier generation he became imbued with the belief that salvation for the artist lay in escape from face-painting into more noble forms of art. His efforts in this direction met with uncommon success for one so young and from provincial America, especially his highly praised so-called history painting, *The Judgment of Jupiter*. He wrote to his mother: "I cannot be happy unless I am pursuing the intellectual branch of the art. Portraits

have none of it; landscape has some of it; but history has it wholly.” And his mother, who looked at the prospects of art in America with a cold Yankee eye, wrote back: “You must not expect to paint anything in this country for which you will receive any money to support you, but portraits.”

She was right, of course. When Morse came back to America and settled in Boston, he was regarded as a social asset in any drawing room, and his *Jupiter*, which was on display in his “painting room,” was highly praised. No one, however, even inquired its price or the price of any of the other paintings he hoped to sell. As a result he went off to New Hampshire with his brushes and paints and, traveling from town to town, did portraits for fifteen dollars a head.

Two of his large paintings, *The Gallery of the Louvre* and *The Old House of Representatives*, were praised by the press and conscientiously ignored by the public. Morse lost money. According to William Dunlap, the earliest historian of our painters and sculptors, *The Old House of Representatives* “was rolled up and packed away for some years. Finally a gentleman offered \$1,000 for it, which was accepted, and our House of Representatives in a body moved to Great Britain.”

But if Morse was unable to make a career in the arts that satisfied him, if he was unable to chisel one out of the icy indifference of his contemporaries, he nonetheless did a great deal toward establishing the acceptability of his profession in the eyes of the community. When Morse settled in New York in the early 1820s, he was disturbed by the schism in art circles that divided young artists from the older mentors of taste who controlled the American Academy. As Henry Tuckerman said: “[Morse] made it his business to heal these wounds.”

The Academy was dominated by the irascible Colonel Trumbull, who could barely bring himself to tolerate the presence of the students who wanted to draw from the Academy’s casts. The public had grown bored with the blind-eyed replicas of statues, and the funds that the Academy’s founders had hoped would flow into its coffers to support their noble effort to bring culture to the city failed to materialize. An exhibition in the Old Alms House, arranged by the Academy in 1816, momentarily seemed to breathe life into the institution and bring encouragement to the artists of the city, but the bickering persisted between those who believed that an academy should be administered by laymen for the benefit of the arts and those who believed it should be a teaching institution administered by artists for the sake of training artists and for exhibiting the work of members.

Morse did his best to reconcile these two views, but his young, republican blood boiled at the autocratic, aristocratic manners and attitude of Colonel Trumbull. There is no need to describe their squabble, but the upshot of it was the founding of the New York Drawing Association, out of which, in 1826, grew the National Academy of Design.

The annual exhibitions of the National Academy provided artists in New York with their first regular exposure to the public, comparable to the shows at the Pennsylvania Academy in Philadelphia. In Boston they had no chance to exhibit until the Athenaeum opened its gallery in 1826. Art, contemporary art, was beginning to become fashionable, and the openings at the National Academy commanded the presence of the socially and politically prestigious. In 1839 ex-Mayor Hone recorded in his delightful diary that he had been present, as an honorary member of the Academy, at a dinner the night before the opening of the spring exhibition. He sat at the right hand of Morse, who was president, at a "table placed in the middle of the great exhibition room, brilliantly lighted." And he reported: "We were surrounded by the beautiful collection of pictures, fresh from the easels of the accomplished artists . . . These are indeed the precious products of an art the tendency of which is to refine the mind, enrich the imagination, and soften the heart of man."

Thirty years before, not even a politician with cultural pretensions could have made such a remark. He might have praised plaster casts of classical statues for refining the mind and enriching the imagination, but he certainly would not have said as much of works by his contemporaries.

The infant arts, as Clio had called them, were awakening from their goodly nap and, to extend the critic's metaphor, were bawling loud enough at last to soften the hearts of the art public. Arts and the artists were becoming socially acceptable; there were even a few Americans who started to collect the works of their contemporaries — men like the New York grocer Luman Reed, Robert Gilmore, Jr., in Baltimore, and even Hone himself. But to suggest that artists had any great impact on the public taste would be unjustified. Thomas Cole, surely one of the most financially successful artists of his time, said in 1838: "I am out of place . . . There are few persons of real taste, and no opportunity for the true artists to develop his powers. The tide of utility sets against the fine arts."

The "tide of utility," or as we call it today, materialism, was not the only tide that set against the fine arts. The artists themselves did not help greatly. Trumbull's insistence that he paint the tremendous murals in the Rotunda of the Capitol came about only after the fire had gone out of the old Colonel's eye; and the public hooted at the finished product, for which they paid \$32,000. John Vanderlyn did no better, and it seems probable that his big *Landing of Columbus* for the Rotunda was mostly painted by young Frenchmen while he enjoyed himself with young French women. Even the conscientious Horatio Greenough completely missed the public temper with his colossal statue of Washington based on a Roman copy of Phidias's Zeus. It cost the public \$20,000 and they howled with laughter and wisecracks. Mayor Hone, that devotee of the arts, called it "a grand, martial Magog,

undressed with a napkin lying in his lap." Another wit said that Washington was proclaiming "Here is my sword — my clothes are in the Patent Office yonder."

There was, to put it simply, a vast degree of misunderstanding on the part of the public of what artists meant by and called "the ideal" in art. James Fenimore Cooper in a letter to Greenough blamed it on the wave of republican feeling, of which Andrew Jackson was the figurehead. "You are in a country," Cooper wrote, "in which every man swaggers and talks, knowledge or no knowledge, brains or no brains; taste or no taste. They are all *ex nato* connoisseurs, politicians, religionists and every man's equal and all men's betters."

Something was about to happen in Europe, however, that had a very considerable effect on the public standing of the American artist if not on a taste for his work. A number of American artists, notably sculptors, became tourist attractions, not only to Americans rich enough to take the grand tour but to Europeans of noble birth or of other fame, or notoriety, that Americans found impressive. Hiram Powers, the perpetrator of the Greek Slave, surely the most famous piece of nineteenth-century American sculpture (if it can be called that) became a sight to be seen in Florence, and anyone who was anyone sought to be invited to the Wednesday receptions at his villa. William Wetmore Story, who lived in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome and there carved his Cleopatras and Medeas and wrote his verses, plays, and essays on Rome, was the center of an artistic and literary circle frequented by the Brownings, Hawthorne, and Lowell, and later by young Henry James. No less a personage than Pope Pius IX arranged to have Story's Cleopatra and his Libyan Sibyl transported to London to be shown in the Roman section of the exhibition of 1862.

This sort of recognition in high places greatly impressed Story's American contemporaries, as did the fact that the Prince of Wales bought from Harriet Hosmer, a transplanted Bostonian, a replica of her Puck. Furthermore she numbered among her clients the empresses of Russia and Austria and several Bavarian kings and the beautiful Queen of Naples. (Harriet Hosmer was Women's Lib incarnate in her day.) At a time when most sophisticated Americans looked to Europe to be told what was tasteful and what art they should like, it is no wonder that they should be impressed by the reputations, and hence the persons, of their expatriate artists. When Story visited America in 1877 (he had long been a permanent resident of Rome), he was astonished and vastly pleased to be treated as a kind of hero. His reputation at home seems to have been based far more on the esteem in which he was held abroad than a taste for his work in America. Americans, he complained, never did understand the concept of the "ideal" that so engrossed him and his contemporary stone-cutters.

While Story, Powers, and Hosmer and their ilk were still rattling the bones of the Greeks and Romans in their Italian villas, other American artists had not only

discovered subjects for their art in the landscape and daily business of America, but a glorious new scheme for selling their wares to the public. This, of course, was the American Art-Union, which almost surely did more to make Americans conscious of their home-produced arts than any other institution of the nineteenth century. To say that it improved their tastes is to shade the point. The Art-Union sharpened their avidity because it appealed at the same time to their cultural pretensions and their gambling spirit. It was its nature as a lottery, not its spiritual uplift or "refinement of the mind" — to use Hone's phrase — that made the annual drawing both a social and a cultural occasion.

However, it would be equally misleading not to admit that the Art-Union spread engravings of much of the best that was being painted in America into thousands upon thousands of proper parlors to take their places with the whatnots and bell jars and what Mrs. Trollope called the "coxcomalities" so loved by the American housewife. It surely made Thomas Cole a household name and his *Voyage of Life* a household treasure. The works of that comic painter, as Tuckerman called him, William Sidney Mount and of George Caleb Bingham — the highbrows were appalled that anything so insistently lowbrow as Bingham's *The Jolly Flatboatmen* should be considered art — became part of the American heritage long before critics were ready to recognize their value. Indeed the influence of Mount, and more especially of Bingham, on the public taste was regarded as exploiting the lowest and not highest artistic responses.

But something, obviously, had happened between the time Morse founded the National Academy of Design in 1826 and the collapse of the Art-Union in 1851, when the New York Supreme Court handed down a decision that it was an illegal lottery. Only a year or so before it died, the president of the Art-Union had declaimed: "The acorn which almost by stealth we planted ten years hence has become an oak. Under its spreading branches, Art reposes itself in grateful security, sheltered from many of the storms which often frown upon genius and talent. What a change has been wrought in the space of a few short years, in the prospects and hopes of American artists!"

It was artists who did the Union in, or, more specifically, jealousies among artists and their old distrust of the laymen who picked the pictures to be raffled and the paintings to be engraved for general distribution. One would like to say that it was from the highest rather than the lowest motives that the artists torpedoed the best ship on which they had yet got passage in America, but that does not seem to have been the case. Quite possibly, the Art-Union had reached its peak and served its purpose, and its gradual decline would have done the artists more of a disfavor than its sudden disappearance.

By the 1860s the collector and critic James Jackson Jarves felt impelled to say:

"It has become the mode to have taste. Private galleries in New York are becoming almost as common as private stables." Clio would have considered this progress. Jarves obviously did not. "Academies and schools of design are few, and but imperfectly established," he said. "Public galleries exist only in idea. Private collections are limited in range, destitute of masterpieces, inaccessible to the multitude."

By the sixties there were a good many American artists who were doing very well financially, especially the landscape painters whom we now more or less bunch together as the Hudson River school. They were also doing well socially, a condition far from the attitude toward the artist that Latrobe was attacking in 1811, when he said that the problem was to prove that art and artists were not corrupting the public morals. Many artists were comfortably ensconced in the membership of the Century Association, where they met as equals, and even as betters, with men of affairs. As Asher Durand's son, John, the editor of *The Crayon*, said: "Our Club is an assemblage of men from all parts of Europe, from all sections of our country, and of every profession — Artists, literary men, Scientists, Physicians, Officers of the Army and Navy, Members of the Bench and Bar, Engineers, Clergymen, Representatives of the Press, Merchants and men of leisure." It was not a matter of artists being allowed to hobnob at the Century with men of affairs; it was the other way around. The Century had grown out of the Sketch Club, an organization of artists; the men of affairs were invited to join them. No one could question — no one but the most arrant snob and social climber — that Durand, Kensett, Huntington, Whittredge, Church, and Inness were gentlemen.

The climate that had been so cold at the beginning of the century had grown considerably more docile by the sixties, and artists were having far more effect on public taste than they had in Allston's and young Morse's day. Their works were being more widely distributed, not just through steel engravings but as chromolithographs, often of high quality. Eastman Johnson's *Barefoot Boy* at five dollars and Bierstadt's *Sunset in the Yosemite Valley* at twelve were recommended by the formidable Catherine Beecher in 1869 in her book *The American Woman's Home* as in good taste. Frederic Church did good business in 1861 with *The Icebergs*, which was published as a chromo not long after his *Heart of the Andes* had been greeted by the clergy as "a wholesome antidote to the sensual nakedness of the Greek Slave and the White Captive." *Heart of the Andes* was called by a critic in *Harper's Weekly* "the finest picture ever painted in this country, and one of the finest ever painted." Indeed *Harper's Weekly* was one of the many magazines that were bringing art to a vastly wider audience in America than ever before, a far larger one than that reached by the art unions and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, which boasted the largest circulation of any magazine in the world in the 1860s. The *Magazine* printed a sort of art criticism that made up in enthusiasm for whatever it may have

lacked in discrimination, although Jarves frequently appeared in that sheet in his measured and elegant tones.

After the Civil War sculpture more or less ceased to be the Clyties, Pucks, Singing Cherubs, and Cleopatras, and by contrast city parks and village greens began to blossom with monuments. Sometimes they were of specific heroes of the war, sometimes rather homely "soldier boys," as they were called, leaning on their muskets; sometimes a Liberty with a Wreath or a Columbia holding a star-spangled shield at arm's length above a helmeted head. The monument business thrived. And as a great deal of it was paid for by public subscription or money from city hall, it represented the popular taste.

But if the monument business was up, the portrait-painting business was down. Photographers like Mathew Brady, with their ornate and expansive emporia and galleries of portraiture, had taken away from all but a few painters the backlog they resented but counted upon, face painting. An art publication called *The Round Table* noted in 1866: "There is no form of art so much discredited today as that of portraiture." E. P. Richardson, in his *Painting in America*, observed that "as the portrait painter vanished, there appeared the impoverished bohemian artist, insecure, embittered, earning his living by teaching instead of practising his art, and dependent for the sale of his work upon the whims of fashion."

One of the whims of fashion with which the artist had to contend was the popular American notion, in any case popular among the rich, that art from Europe was per se superior, and therefore preferable, to the homemade variety. This attitude is commonly blamed on a general feeling of cultural insecurity in America, a continuing tendency to look over our shoulders to Europe to see if we were doing all right. But artists themselves did little to discourage this attitude, probably because they shared it, even at the cost of their own livelihoods. It was not unnatural that, as they turned away from London, Paris, and Düsseldorf as places to learn their craft, they should come home extolling the virtues of their masters. However, the first artist of consequence I know of to launch the works of a foreign school in America was William Morris Hunt, who was responsible for the vogue for the Barbizon painters in Boston even before they were generally recognized in Paris.

Whatever one may think of Hunt as a painter, his influence as a tastemaker in the sixties was considerable. This influence was based not just on charm, an eloquent tongue, and a considerable gift for teaching, but a firm conviction. Essentially every tastemaker is a teacher. To him the important thing is to spread the word, and Hunt found it easier to spread it among women than among men, the common condition of tastemakers throughout the nineteenth century and much of this one. Matters of taste, even in literary Boston, were considered women's business.

Many years later echoing Thomas Cole's complaint about the tide of utility set-

ting against the fine arts, Hunt declared: "In another country I might have become a painter." It is possible that he might have. If his temperament had not been so gentlemanly and his intellect so concerned with theory, he might have discovered before it was too late what America in the vulgar and exciting post-war years was about. But it was too late when he found himself working elbow-to-elbow with other artisans and mechanics in the Capitol at Albany and realized that here was a world he knew nothing of but which fascinated him. He drowned himself a few months later.

Although I have confined myself thus far to painters and sculptors, architects and builders obviously had far more effect on the public taste than the makers of pictures and statues. Early in the century Latrobe said "Down with Rome! Up with Greece!," and thanks partly to his dicta and partly to Alexander Jackson Davis and men like William Strickland and T. U. Walters of Philadelphia and the compilers of builders' handbooks like Asher Benjamin and Minard Lefever, the landscape and the cityscape blossomed with temples of all degrees of elegance and simplicity. Then came the revolt led by Fenimore Cooper and Greenough and more popularly, perhaps, by Andrew Jackson Downing against the "tasteless temples" as he called them, and we had a shower of Gothic dwellings, churches, and institutional buildings, and so on from style to style, fad to fad, until the architects trained at the Beaux-Arts in Paris, led by Richard Morris Hunt, began to employ painters and sculptors. H. H. Richardson gave the greatest impetus to this association when he designed Trinity Church in Boston with the work of a painter integral to his concept of its interior. John La Farge, working with Richardson, opened a new era of congeniality between painter and sculptor. La Farge, given charge of the interior embellishments of Saint Thomas's Church in New York, commissioned from the young Augustus Saint-Gaudens an Adoration of the Cross by Angels, unfortunately destroyed by fire and now known only from engravings.

Elsewhere façades in the Beaux-Arts manner were designed by Hunt, by McKim and White, by Carrere and Hastings, which were intended to be ornamented with colossal sculpture. Inside these buildings were lunettes designed to be filled with murals. Sculptors and painters were expected to devise subjects of such an abstract and ideal nature as Justice, or Asia, Brooklyn, or Victory. La Farge himself painted Athens in a lunette, with figures wearing modern hair-dos and apparently dressed in finery from a theatrical costumer. His stained-glass windows, even more than those of Louis Comfort Tiffany, caused what were then called "picture windows" to appear in city dining rooms and on stair landings everywhere in America. La Farge is credited with some two thousand of these windows. He was, perhaps, less of an artist than a tastemaker. "He founded no school," his friend the critic Royal Cortissoz wrote. "His work exerted a spiritual force. It refined taste and fostered imagina-

tion. It made powerfully for the establishment of a high ideal." His contemporaries regarded him as something "Leonardesque, something of a universal genius." It is interesting that Virgil Barker in his *American Painting*, published in 1950, forty years after La Farge's death, mentions him only once, and then with Henry and William James as one of Hunt's minor pupils in Newport.

The influence of the flamboyant William Merritt Chase, with his Russian wolfhound and velvet coats, was quite different from that of the searching, philosophical La Farge. He was a man with panache both personally and stylistically, and it was he who brought to the famous Tenth Street Studios, and hence to the New York art world, a kind of social brilliance and insouciance that it had not enjoyed before. Like Hunt he was a gifted and enthusiastic teacher, to whom literally thousands of pupils were attracted by his personal charm and the extraordinary swiftness and sureness of his brush. He was a sort of American Luca Va Presto of the 1880s.

The art atmosphere in the seventies was quite different from the days of the dignified, conservative art-makers whose concern was to make their profession respectable. A new generation, which had been to Paris, Düsseldorf, and Munich and had drunk the wine of bohemianism, came home not just with dashing brushes but a dashing disrespectful attitude toward social conventions and a sense of belonging to a group set apart from the fusty men of merchandise, briefs, and mortgages.

Not that the market for their works was anything but catastrophic. The Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, to which millions of Americans crowded, made every foreign artifact more attractive than anything American, and the "artistic craze" of the late seventies and eighties turned starry eyes to the Orient, to teapots and Hokusai prints and almost anything from the brush of a Frenchman. The attitude was very different at the end of the seventies from what it had been in 1872 when the contents of Kensett's studio had brought the magnificent sum of \$150,000. Samuel Isham, in his *History of American Painting* (1905), commented: "When the younger men went abroad to study in the 1870s, painting was a lucrative profession; when they returned they found it not possible for a man to live by it, even if he were talented, well-taught and hard working." Isham knew from first-hand experience. When he got back from Paris in 1878, he gave up painting and studied and practiced law, though he subsequently took again to his brushes and eventually became a member of the National Academy.

If Chase did not raise the fortunes of American painters once more to the heights enjoyed by Kensett and Inness at their most successful, he helped to bring a new sophistication to American tastes. He was, I believe, responsible for the first French impressionist paintings shown in America, when he and his friend Carol Beckwith organized an exhibition of impressionist and Barbizon paintings to raise funds for the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. Chase, too, was responsible for the arrival in

New York of Manet's *Boy with a Sword* and *Woman with a Parrot*, to become part of Edwin Davis's collection.

Mary Cassatt's contribution to American taste was of a quite different nature. Her friendship with Mrs. Henry O. Havemeyer was largely responsible for the extraordinary range and quality of the Havemeyer collection, one of the great treasures of this museum. She also played a role in the taste for impressionists that makes the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago so commanding.

One is likely to forget, however, that Mrs. Potter Palmer, chairman of the Woman's Committee for the Columbian Exposition of 1893, persuaded Miss Cassatt to paint a very large mural for the Woman's Building at the fair, which was designed by Sophia Hayden, aged twenty-two, from Boston. Miss Cassatt had a glass-roofed building constructed; but fearful of climbing on a scaffolding, she had a trench dug so that she might lower her canvas into it when she painted the upper portions. (Harriet Hosmer would have howled in derision at this ladylike behavior. She liked ladders.)

It was indeed a long artistic, professional, and aesthetic journey beset with troubles that the American artist had traveled from the time when Trumbull laid down the law in the Academy, and Allston shriveled in the Philistine chill of Boston, when Morse gave up the profession of "beggar," as he called it, and took to tying the world together with his electric wires — it was a long way from then to the Columbian Exposition.

Tuckerman had written that when Vanderlyn died America was not ready for what he, Tuckerman, called "the superstructure of the beautiful." The Columbian Exposition was nothing if not superstructure, and it tried with all the might and all the talent it could muster to be "beautiful." There were not only architects and sculptors and painters, quite literally by the hundreds, turning the lakeshore into a flashing city of miracles, there were poets and composers glorifying Columbia. A young woman named Harriet Monroe, later to become the founder and editor of *Poetry*, a distinguished magazine of verse, wrote an ode, parts of which were sung by a chorus of five thousand voices at the opening ceremonies. "Lady of beauty! Thou shalt win," it began, and concluded:

Glory and Power and Length of Days.
The sun and moon shall be thy kin,
The stars shall sing thy praise,
All hail; we bring thee vows most sweet
To strew before thy winged feet.
Now onward be thy ways!

A better-known verse about the Columbian Exposition was composed by Richard Watson Gilder, editor of *The Century Magazine*. He wrote with enthusiasm:

Say not, "Greece is no more."
Through the clear morn
On light wings borne
Her white-winged soul sinks on the New
World's breast.
Ah! Happy West --
Greece flowers anew, and all her temples soar!

Probably the most quoted, and also the most fatuous (and in some ways most endearing) statement made by anybody about the exposition was Saint-Gaudens's remark to the architect Daniel H. Burnham: "Look here, old fellow," he said, "do you realize this is the greatest meeting of artists since the fifteenth century?"

The Columbian Exposition was meant to mark the end of Philistinism and the dawn of Athens in America, but not everyone thought so. Louis Sullivan looked at the buildings and wrote: "Thus architecture died in the land of the free and the home of the brave. In a land declaring its fervid democracy, its inventiveness, its resourcefulness, its unique daring, enterprise and promise"

Henry Adams scratched his head and said of the artists: "They talked as though they worked only for themselves, as though art, to the Western people, was a stage decoration, a diamond shirt-stud, a paper collar."

The long road from limner to tastemaker, from social pariah to drawing-room ornament had been accomplished. Along the way America had produced many art-makers but only a handful of artists — three or four great architects, five or six first-rate painters, a sculptor or two of more than fashionable talent and accomplishment. If there had been less concern for respectability and more for soul-searching, less for elegant craftsmanship and more for stretching the sensibilities and the intellect, there would, possibly, have been more artists. The dilemma of the nineteenth-century artist as social being was stated simply and clearly by Henry B. Fuller, writing in *The Bookman* in the last year of the century. In an article called "Art in America" he quietly observed: "Some of our ideals are against art. There are those of us who want to be artists and give themselves out, and yet want to be gentlemen and hold themselves back."

STUART P. FELD

The Nineteenth-Century Artist and His Posthumous Public

I wish to discuss our tastes essentially as they relate to the tastes of our parents, our grandparents, and their parents. As early as 1790, in a fascinating book published in London with the title *On the Nature and Principles of Taste*, Archibald Allison wrote: "There is scarcely any subject upon which men differ more than concerning the objects of their pleasures and amusements, and this difference subsists not only among individuals, but among ages and nations, almost every generation accusing that which immediately preceded it of bad taste in building, furniture, and dress." Allison goes only so far as to refer to the rather dubious tastes of the previous generation, but many writers since have more fully explored our attitudes toward the fashions of the past. The history of taste and collecting has quite convincingly proved that by and large we have had little sympathy for the arts and decorations of our parents; we think, however, that the fashions left by our grandparents are, after all, rather quaint and charming, and that the art and artifacts left by our great-grandparents are really quite wonderful and exciting. With the passage of time, objects venerated during the last century are emerging from their long confinement in basements and attics to take an honored place with older objects that were rediscovered a generation or two ago. Just as the heritage of Colonial America was rediscovered in the quarter century that bracketed the great Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, so the art of nineteenth-century America has gradually gained in popularity during the last two decades to become today one of the most enthusiastically sought of all collectibles. The reasons for this change of fashion are manifold, but certainly the important role that contemporary American

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painting and architecture have played in setting international trends and styles has had considerable influence in focusing attention on their historical background. Chauvinism and nostalgia for a simpler way of life, unencumbered by the perplexing problems of contemporary society, are two other reasons often given for the burgeoning interest in the art of nineteenth-century America, but these reasons are no more specifically American than is contemporary taste for nineteenth-century art. In Italy, France, Germany, the British Isles, and the countries of eastern Europe, there is an unprecedented demand for paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts of the nineteenth century; and various preservation groups across Europe have sought to rescue from demolition major architectural monuments of the period.

Unfortunately, too much of nineteenth-century America has already been destroyed or altered beyond recognition. In writing nearly forty years ago of the critical years from 1865 to 1895, which he dubbed "the brown decades," Lewis Mumford warned that "there is danger that the works of this period will vanish before they have been properly evaluated," resulting in "a grave gap in the story of American culture." Although many of Mumford's concepts already seem dated and untrue — the art and life of those decades was, for example, perhaps not all as brown as he suggests — the fact that his warning was not taken seriously is unfortunate, for in the intervening period a considerable part of our nineteenth-century heritage has been lost forever.

There is an old maxim that conveys the sentiment that "I know what I like, and I like what I know." By the beginning of this century, most of the great Hudson River school artists and their contemporaries had died, and already their works had passed out of public view. The case of Frederic Edwin Church is typical. His first great success, the panoramic Niagara now in the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, brought him international fame when it was exhibited in 1857. Two years later Church won critical acclaim with *Heart of the Andes* and sold it to the New York collector William T. Blodgett for \$10,000, the highest price paid to that date for a painting by a living American artist. For the next dozen years Church broke exhibition and sales records repeatedly and became the best-known American artist of his time. By the mid-1870s, however, the situation was changing. One critic, after visiting the National Academy of Design's 1875 exhibition, rejoiced that "landscape art [held] a somewhat subordinate rank instead of that place of supremacy which was formerly the dread of the ordinary visitor, and which some years reached a point so absolute that walking through the Academy seemed like exiling oneself among wildernesses where the human form was unknown." And in the following year, although another observer was misinformed when he wrote that "Church and Bierstadt were paid . . . 'fabulous prices' ten years ago for pictures that would now sell for a tenth their former market value" — actually that year *Heart of the Andes*

was resold to the New York merchant A. T. Stewart for \$10,000, and Niagara, which had originally brought \$10,000, was sold at auction to William Wilson Corcoran for \$12,500 – he was nevertheless anticipating an attitude that was to become standard in the years ahead. Indeed, by the time of his death in 1900, Church had become so unknown that an obituary stated that “the fact that he was still alive has been almost forgotten by present-day artists,” and that most of the “rising generation of painters confuse Frederick [sic] Edwin Church with Frederick Stuart Church.” Interests and fashions had changed, and popular taste preferred the mellifluous, vapid nymphs of the latter to the heroic, topographical landscapes of one of the best artists this country has ever produced.

In customary fashion, Church was given a handsome memorial exhibition at the Metropolitan, of which he had been a founding trustee, only seven weeks after his death. His Niagara, which had been extensively repainted twice since it had first left his studio, was brought from Washington, and thirteen of his other major works were borrowed from the parlors of his wealthy patrons. As it happened, Church was again quickly forgotten, and this was the last public showing of his work for sixty-six years.

Most of the other painters of the nineteenth century met with similar fates, and gradually an increasing lack of familiarity with their works of art, which were generally considered old-fashioned, encouraged the public to neglect them. In the unparalleled collection of Hudson River school paintings at the Metropolitan, the majority of the important works – five of the six Coles, four of the six Durands, the three Doughtys, and many others – were acquired in the late 1890s or in the first decade or so of this century. Although one would like to attribute their presence at the Metropolitan to the beneficence of their respective donors, one suspects that they were given less for the enrichment of public taste than to unburden their owners of monumental canvases that had gone out of fashion.

The impression should not be left that there was no interest in nineteenth-century American paintings in the first half of this century. The Metropolitan and other museums not only made some noteworthy purchases, even at the beginning of the century, but also recognized the achievement of our nineteenth-century painters through occasional exhibitions. In 1917, for example, the Metropolitan organized an exhibition of twenty-nine Hudson River school paintings from the permanent collection to commemorate the opening of the Catskill Aqueduct. In 1922 the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia assembled 235 works by Thomas Sully for a comprehensive retrospective exhibition, and in 1925 it honored another native son, John Neagle, with a similar exhibition of 125 paintings. In 1940 the Albany Institute of History and Art organized the first important Cole show since the memorial exhibition of 1848. Although there was very little

scholarly interest in individual artists of the nineteenth century, other general exhibitions and various histories of American painting did provide occasional glimpses of the art of this period, but by and large they achieved no profound insights and failed to create any widespread interest.

It was really the opening in 1949 of the collection of more than 225 American paintings formed by Maxim Karolik for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the simultaneous publication of a fully illustrated catalogue that signaled the revival of interest in nineteenth-century American paintings. Since then hundreds of scholars, collectors, museum directors, and curators have taken a fresh look. During the last twenty years an incalculable number of books and articles have appeared, some monographic studies, some critical catalogues, some essays on individual periods, movements, or styles. This is not the place to evaluate the bibliography of American art, but in a general way one can say that not a great deal of what has been written has been characterized by the highest standards of scholarship and connoisseurship.

Although many major artists were at work in the United States during the nineteenth century, only a fraction of them has ever been the subject of a full-scale scholarly monograph or a catalog raisonné. We know too little about their stylistic development, their chronology, their sources, and their influences. The authoritative book on Thomas Cole, for example, is still the biography published in 1853 by his friend the Reverend Louis Legrand Noble. During the last few years the situation has changed, happily, and it is encouraging to note that serious books are now in preparation on Cole, Durand, Gifford, Whittredge, Kensett, Cropsey, Homer, Eakins, and others. One hopes the results will be as comprehensive and thorough as Maurice Bloch's excellent two-volume work on Bingham, published in 1967. Perhaps the finest study in print of the work of a single American artist, Bloch's duet of volumes includes a thorough critical biography, copious illustrations, and an accurate catalogue raisonné with every conceivable fact, figure, and reference presented in an orderly and usable manner.

Two other types of publications have added considerably to the material readily available about American art. Under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation's program of publishing catalogues of fine arts collections, which since 1961 has distributed nearly \$600,000 to thirty-two museums on a matching-grant basis, a series of well-illustrated scholarly catalogues has been commissioned. Of the forty-nine underwritten to date, fifteen are devoted to one or another aspect of American art. The seven that have appeared vary widely in approach, but each has made an important contribution to our knowledge of these collections and has made available information too long hidden in museum archives, curators' heads, or on the backs or bases of the objects themselves.

The many retrospective exhibitions honoring nineteenth-century American artists organized in the last several years have also added immeasurably to our knowledge, both about the individual artists and the milieu in which they worked. Through these exhibitions we have been able — in most cases for the first time — to see together a substantial part of an artist's production. In the last few years excellent shows have been organized of the work of such artists as Mount, Bingham, Whit-tredege, Cole, Heade, Kensett, Cropsey, and Lane, each by a scholar who has wisely used a museum exhibition as a stepping stone toward the publication of a definitive biography and catalogue.

As a result of extensive research in the field of nineteenth-century American art, we have made many discoveries and have clarified many misconceptions. One of the most exciting revelations was made by Alfred Frankenstein in the course of his research on William Michael Harnett. Four years after the rediscovery in 1935 of his *The Faithful Colt* (figure 1), the Downtown Gallery in New York set out to collect his paintings and held the first exhibition of his work. This show, which included fourteen paintings, stimulated a great deal of interest in an artist who at the time of his death, nearly a half-century before, had been called "the most realistic painter of his age," and several leading private collectors and museums quickly acquired examples of his work. The magnitude of interest in Harnett's work in the ensuing years is reflected in the fact that by 1947 more than 100 paintings ascribed to him had found their way into public and private collections. When Frankenstein undertook the first serious study of Harnett's work in that year, he found that the pictures appeared to fall into two distinct stylistic groups, one a so-called "hard" style, as seen in *The Faithful Colt* and in *Still Life with Letter to Thomas B. Clarke*, at Andover, characterized by a careful differentiation of surfaces and textures, crystalline draughtsmanship, and a disposition of the objects in a shallow space, and a second, or "soft," style, typified by *Old Companions* (figure 2), in which there was no attempt to represent the different textures of the objects, the outlines lacked strong definition, and the space was less rigidly constructed. Frankenstein soon came to the conclusion that a great many of the paintings ascribed to Harnett were not actually by him. Apparently the increased demand for Harnett's still lifes had prompted several unscrupulous individuals to add his name to pictures very close to his in subject and style that bore the signatures of several obscure artists of the period, especially the then completely unknown artist John Frederick Peto. Paintings with forged signatures had appeared as early as the 1939 retrospective; one of them was *Old Scraps* (figure 3), which was purchased from the exhibition by a private collector and presented to the Museum of Modern Art in 1940. On the basis of a careful stylistic comparison with Peto's work, the bulk of which he found still intact in the artist's studio at Island Heights, New Jersey,

Frankenstein showed how this picture and others, including *The Old Cremona*, now in the Metropolitan Museum, were not Harnett's in the so-called "soft" style but were actually works by Peto. Frankenstein also pointed out several startling inconsistencies. Although Harnett had died in 1892, the postmarks on several of the painted letters were dated in November 1894. One of them bore the name of Lerado, Ohio, where Peto's wife was born and where she is known to have visited late in that year. At the same time, Sheldon Keck determined that a Peto signature and the date 1894 lay hidden beneath overpaint immediately to the left of the faked Harnett signature and that the name and address of Harnett on the envelope at the lower right had been added in pen and ink over an obliterated inscription. Although the faker had not bothered to find out that the type of postcard shown at the upper right was not issued until 1894, he had done a certain amount of research; for in altering the name and address on this card from John F. Peto/Island Heights/N. J. to those of a person whose name ended in the letters "lings" and who lived on Wharton Street, Philadelphia, he was attempting to identify Old Scraps with a then unknown rack picture that Harnett had painted for George Hulings in 1888 and which he knew from the description that had appeared in an article about Hulings in the *Philadelphia Item* for June 11, 1895.

The epilogue to this fascinating chapter in the history of American collecting was written only recently, when not only was an old lining canvas removed from Old Scraps, revealing Peto's signature, the date of November 1894, and the artist's original title, *Old Time Letter Rack* — all of which, incidentally, the faker had tried to obliterate before deciding that it was easier simply to reline the picture — but also the original Harnett rack picture painted for Mr. Hulings was discovered and was viewed in an exhibition preceding an auction at Parke-Bernet Galleries.

Many other misattributions, some less intentional, have been perpetrated on the collector of American art. One involves the work of the noted New York cabinet-maker Duncan Phyfe, to whom literally thousands of pieces of furniture in the Regency taste have been attributed. The two major books, Charles Over Cornelius's *Furniture Masterpieces of Duncan Phyfe* (1923) and Nancy McClelland's *Duncan Phyfe and the English Regency* (1939), both written ostensibly to define the specific character of his style, have been instead the leading contributors of misinformation about the furniture that he produced and sold. In the early part of this century there was a considerable vogue for the delicately reeded and carved furniture attributed to Phyfe, and in 1922 Cornelius, who was a member of the staff of the Metropolitan, organized an exhibition of Phyfe's work. In the following year he published his book, in which he recorded "the many surprising finds" he had made during his search for material for the exhibition. Unfortunately, he failed to mention and illustrate a group of nearly two dozen pieces by Phyfe documented by a

bill presented to B. Clark in 1834, which had been brought to his attention too late for inclusion in the exhibition, and in a number of cases he relied upon unsound family traditions and other documentary material we can no longer accept. Furthermore, he published a wide variety of furniture that must represent the work of several dozen cabinetmakers active in New York and elsewhere. Cornelius's statement that the objects that "are shown [in the book] will form a valuable basis for future attribution" has been taken much too seriously by all students, collectors, and dealers who have thumbed through its pages. The line drawings that he published showing carved details from so-called Phyfe furniture record much more the whole vocabulary of New York furniture ornament of the period than they do the products of the Phyfe workshop.

Nancy McClelland attempted to be much more scholarly and illustrated several labeled Phyfe pieces, such as a cluster-column work table at Winterthur, and discussed in detail certain other objects and groups of objects that were convincingly documented as Phyfes. At the same time, she admitted that "by no means all the best furniture made in New York between 1795 and 1825 came out of Duncan Phyfe's workshop," and she showed a typically Phyfe breakfast table bearing the label of George Woodruff, who worked on John Street, New York, and other "Phyfe-style" pieces by Michael Allison, John Gruez, and others. But in reproducing Cornelius's line drawings, she perpetuated the impression that all pieces with carved acanthus and water leaves, reeded legs, lyres, and certain other decorative details were to be considered the work of Duncan Phyfe. Thus for many years pieces such as a cluster-column breakfast table in the Metropolitan's collection, with carved acanthus supports almost identical to those illustrated by Cornelius, was unhesitatingly attributed to Phyfe. As a new generation of scholars has looked more carefully at the work of Phyfe and his contemporaries, however, the whole situation has grown more complex. It is no longer possible to attribute a piece on the basis of design alone, as we know that cabinetmakers pirated patterns from one another. At the same time, attribution on the basis of the similarity of carved details is unreliable because already by the early nineteenth century professional carvers supplied many cabinet and chair makers with the carved elements they needed. Indeed, a table at the Museum of the City of New York dramatically similar to the Metropolitan's example bears the label of Phyfe's contemporary Michael Allison, and a unique marble-topped stand that would unquestionably have been considered the work of Duncan Phyfe a generation ago has a label of the French emigré cabinetmaker Charles-Honoré Lannuier, showing that he also worked in a manner very different from the French Empire style with figural elements and ormolu mounts usually associated with his name.

In emphasizing the problems of Harnett and Phyfe one should remember that

they are not isolated examples. Unfortunately, so many of those who have written on American art have followed too closely the opinions of those who preceded them and have not themselves taken a fresh, independent look at their material. Those who have, have found a fertile field to plow. When the late Albert TenEyck Gardner and I were working on the catalogue of the Metropolitan's American paintings, we both felt that Washington Allston's famous *Deluge* of 1804 (figure 4) could not be considered his work stylistically. Since its acquisition in 1909, as a gift of the painter William Merritt Chase, the picture had been published dozens of times by all of the leading scholars in the American field and had appeared in countless exhibitions across the country as a typical example of Allston's Paris years, when he had painted the also often published and reproduced *Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea* (figure 5). In the Museum archives we found documents indicating that the attribution of the painting had been questioned at the time of its acquisition. Although convincing evidence had been presented at the time showing that the painting was by the English painter Joshua Shaw, this was ignored because Chase was certain that the painting was by Allston since it was known to have come from Allston's family in South Carolina. The controversy was immediately forgotten, however, and for more than a half-century the picture was considered one of the major monuments of Romanticism in America. In reopening the question of attribution, we found that Shaw had indeed exhibited a *Deluge* of the same size at the British Institution in London in 1813. By good chance we found a review of that exhibition in which the Metropolitan's picture was carefully described, thus granting us permission to remove this famous "Allston" from Allston's oeuvre. One wonders how many other paintings are masquerading as American masterpieces.

In 1946 the City Art Museum of St. Louis acquired Thomas Cole's *Dream of Arcadia* – or at least it thought it did. When the picture appeared in the Cole retrospective at the Wadsworth Atheneum and the Whitney Museum two years later, it was assigned the date 1838, on the basis of a letter from the artist to his friend Asher Durand and its appearance in the National Academy of Design exhibition for that year. Although the organizers of the 1948 retrospective certainly consulted the records of the American Art-Union, which had bought many of Cole's paintings and had organized a memorial exhibition in 1848, they apparently missed the important fact that Cole's original painting measured 40 x 64 inches and not the 27 x 38 inches of the St. Louis picture. It was only in the course of his extensive research into the life and work of Cole in connection with a four-museum exhibition in 1969, and ultimately a critical biography and catalog raisonné, that Howard Merritt of the University of Rochester identified a painting given to the Denver Art Museum in 1954 as the original and the St. Louis canvas as just another of the many anonymous mid-nineteenth-century copies after the engraving James Smilie made in 1850 for the American Art-Union.

Similarly, when Theodore Stebbins was gathering material for the Martin Johnson Heade retrospective in 1969, he found that the famous Harbor at Rio de Janeiro, another often published picture in the City Art Museum of St. Louis, was very possibly a copy after a colored wood-engraving published in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* in April 1876, and that the original painting by Heade, one of the pictures he had exhibited in Rio in 1864, lay hidden in the imposing Lippitt Mansion in Providence, much where Governor Henry Lippitt had placed it with his three other Heades when he bought them from the artist in 1866.

Although one can often be misled by the alleged history of works of art, there is no question but that provenance and documentation are becoming increasingly important in our study of American art of the nineteenth century. One might say that pictures and other works of art have a habit of being published, exhibited, or otherwise documented when they are new, and that it falls to those of subsequent generations to make sure that this documentation is applied to the correct works of art. Thus, when William Sidney Mount's *Cider Making* was discovered several years ago, we knew immediately a considerable amount about its history, including the name of the collector who commissioned it, its early exhibition record, and the fact that there existed two pencil drawings that were studies for the painting. It did not take a considerable amount of probing to find out that Mount had charged \$250 for the painting and that at least his brother thought that it should be enlarged to fill one of the "vacant Squares" in the Rotunda of the Capitol at Washington.

In 1911 the Metropolitan Museum acquired an imposing landscape by Asher B. Durand, which was signed and dated 1850. In place of its original title, which had long since been forgotten, the Museum supplied this romantic picture with the title *Imaginary Landscape*. And so it remained until a half-dozen years ago when it was convincingly identified as the long lost *Landscape: Scene from "Thanatopsis,"* a picture that Durand had painted under the inspiration of Bryant's poem and had exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1850. The painting thus took its place in the long parade of works that established Durand as one of the leading painters in New York in the middle years of the nineteenth century.

At the same time that the Metropolitan acquired its unidentified painting by Durand, the Berkshire Museum received as a gift a large genre painting (figure 6), simply titled *Landscape*, with the signature of William Sidney Mount. The picture remained on exhibition for many years, virtually unnoticed and unpublished until it was included as the latest painting in a major exhibition of Mount's work last year at the National Gallery and three other museums. Although the catalogue briefly questions why the picture had never been published, why it is not mentioned in the artist's copious diaries and letters, why it does not relate to any of Mount's countless pencil studies, and why it is of unusually large size — 41 x 50 inches, more than twice the size of the largest documented work by Mount — it boldly concludes that

“the style of the work is clearly that of Mount’s last years.” Yet close examination reveals that the signature is different from that on any of Mount’s accepted paintings and that the technique is totally alien to Mount’s late or early works. The picture is clearly not by Mount, but sadly its inclusion in the catalogue of the Mount exhibition will mislead students of American art for years to come. The only positive note is that the picture can be identified as a typical work of Mount’s gifted contemporary, Jerome Thompson, on the basis of such signed pictures as *The Haymakers*, *Mount Mansfield, Vermont* (figure 7).

We are not always so fortunate in problems of attribution. For many years *Picnic in the Catskills* (figure 8) was considered to be by Henry Inman and was widely published and exhibited as a rare genre work by an artist who was essentially a portrait painter. Although a careful comparison of the picture with the fully documented *Dismissal of School on an October Afternoon* (figure 9) has led to the conclusion that *Picnic in the Catskills* is not by Inman, we have not yet been able to determine just who did it.

If one of our major problems today in studying American art of the nineteenth century is that a vast number of objects — not just paintings, but buildings, furniture, and the minor arts as well — have become disassociated from the names of the artists who created them and the historical situations of which they were originally a part, others are certainly that many important works have been sadly altered over the years, some have fallen into a deplorable state of neglect, and some have been destroyed completely. It is not difficult to account for why this has happened. To some extent, of course, it has to do with changing fashions, changing uses, and changing tastes, but beyond this it has to do with the appearance of objects, and there is no question that a great deal of the furniture and architecture of the nineteenth century lost much appeal as layers of grime dulled the rich surfaces of another era.

The original building of The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, built after the designs of James Renwick, Jr., during 1859 to 1861, was doomed to demolition because it had darkened so considerably with age and so much of the brownstone ornament was crumbling, seemingly beyond repair. But, happily, the choice was made to restore the ornament (figure 10), and the handsomely refurbished building will soon open as the Smithsonian’s showcase for American decorative arts. Similarly, for a long while American furniture of the mid-nineteenth century, its bright fabrics torn and tired, its gilding tarnished, and its rich veneers camouflaged under layers of dirt and deteriorated varnish, was totally ignored or was purchased only by those who thought that white paint and lavender velvet were suitable accompaniments to rose carving. But in the preparation of “Nineteenth-Century America,” the Metropolitan admirably demonstrated that cleaned ormolu, French polishing,

and appropriate upholstery have once again given these pieces the tantalizingly rich effects they have lacked for so long.

Because of their appeal in recent years, many American paintings of the nineteenth century have been cleaned and have received necessary conservation; but the great plaster frames that provided their settings when they were young have all too frequently been discarded as cumbersome, dusty relics of another day, as is the case with Thomas Eakins's *The Swimming Hole*, which sported a twenty-five-dollar linen special when it arrived for the nineteenth-century American exhibition. In a letter dated March 2, 1836, to his patron Luman Reed, Thomas Cole told of his plans to paint a special picture for the National Academy of Design exhibition in that year: "I have already commenced a view from Mt. Holyoke," he wrote, referring to *The Oxbow*, now in the Metropolitan; "I have written to [a dealer] to make me a frame like your large ones; you know 'a frame is the very heart of a picture,' and I have never yet had in the exhibition a picture with a good heart." Although Cole's statement might be considered something of an exaggeration, no one can deny that the original plaster frame of *The Oxbow* adds immeasurably to its impact as a significant work of art of its time and place. In destroying such elements, we are irretrievably altering the aesthetics of another age. In reframing Eakins's picture for exhibition, for example, we are attempting to correct the misjudgment of the past; but 1970 Victorian, as hard as we try, is hardly a substitute for the workmanship, the design, and most importantly, the spirit of another time. The lesson of Williamsburg has taught us that no matter how hard we try, there are certain things that cannot be duplicated.

For many years we have been decrying the mass destruction of our major architectural monuments of the nineteenth century, but it continues. In 1956 Alexander Jackson Davis's great Harrall-Wheeler house in Bridgeport, which had been given to the city as a historical house and park was threatened by a group desiring to erect a new City Hall and civic center. It became a political issue when Samuel Tedesco promised that if he were elected mayor he would see that the house was preserved. However, one of the first things he did when he assumed office was to agree to the demolition of the house to make room for a parking lot. Fortunately, some of the objects were spared and one room from the house has now been installed in the Smithsonian's new Museum of History and Technology, but this is hardly a substitute for the loss of an untouched work of one of our most important architects.

Sometimes, however, it takes the added perspective of another generation to understand the tragedy of such a loss. Looking back on the 1946 auction of the contents of Laurelton Hall, the residence of Louis Comfort Tiffany at Cold Spring Harbor, one regrets the decision of the Tiffany Foundation to disperse this fascinating collection of Tiffany's own productions and art that he had gathered from all

over the world. Only eleven years later the house itself was consumed in a fire, and we are left today with only photographs and fragments such as a startling mosaic column to represent the greatest monument of the art nouveau in America.

One could go on and on despairing the losses of our nineteenth-century architecture. For example, how will our children and their children regard the recent "restoration" of the Great Hall of this museum? Some of us had hoped that it would indeed be a restoration to Richard Morris Hunt's Beaux-Arts grandeur of more than a half a century ago (figures 11, 12). Instead, as I see it, it has involved the destruction of some of Hunt's basic spatial relationships. Through the years, the Great Hall has been the target of many "restorations" and many alterations. In the 1940s it was cleaned out, except for a few pieces of monumental sculpture and a few tapestries, to reveal the purity of the original design. In the fifties sales desks of all sorts took over. Along the way it was decided that the blocks that once supported the lamps along the balustrade should be removed, and they disappeared. Further it was proposed that the exterior staircase be removed in favor of escalators to the Great Hall, a Piranesian scheme that was fortunately not carried out. But now with Pennsylvania Station gone and Grand Central Terminal threatened, it seems unfortunate that one of the few great monuments of the Gilded Age remaining in New York should not have been truly restored.

This would make great sense. One of the announced purposes of the exhibitions "Nineteenth-Century America" and "The Rise of an American Architecture" was to promote widespread interest in the preservation of the monuments of the nineteenth century. One hopes that the impact of these exhibitions and the projected expansion of the American Wing to include galleries and period rooms devoted to the arts of the United States from 1810 to 1910 will be as effective to this end as the opening of the American Wing was in 1924 in spreading interest in American art of the Colonial and Federal periods.

This activity at the Metropolitan comes at a time when there is an unparalleled interest in nineteenth-century American art. Museums all over the country are re-evaluating their collections, filling in gaps, and creating new installations. Long-forgotten works such as Rembrandt Peale's once famous Court of Death, in the Detroit Institute of Arts, and his Washington before Yorktown, in the Corcoran, have been placed on exhibition for the first time in generations, not so much as examples of great painting but as cultural curiosities of another day. Emanuel Leutze's Washington Crossing the Delaware, long consigned to a shrine built especially to house it at Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, has now been recalled and placed permanently on exhibition in this museum, with the idea of acquainting a new generation with one of our grandfathers' principal enthusiasms.

The donor of Washington Crossing the Delaware, John Stewart Kennedy, would also be pleased at the attention that is now being paid to the enormous Niagara by Frederic Church that he gave to the National Gallery of Scotland in 1886. So would H. H. Andrew of Sheffield, England, whose great Harnett, *The Old Cupboard Door*, resurfaced only recently as one of the highlights in a *trompe-l'oeil* show at the National Gallery in Washington after being hidden in Sheffield's Graves Art Gallery since the turn of the century.

Increasing attention is being given to the whole range of decorative arts of the nineteenth century. An exhibition such as "Classical America," organized by Berry Tracy at the Newark Museum in 1962, provided further evidence that good design and craftsmanship did not die with the eighteenth century. Under the further stimulus of the refurbishing of the White House during the Kennedy Administration, the furniture and the silver of the period 1800 to 1830 have gained enormously in popularity and are now being sought by museums, private collectors, and historic houses across the country. Bayou Bend at Houston has just opened a Greek revival parlor. The Metropolitan has acquired several architectural interiors representing various phases of the Greek revival, as well as many of the appropriate furnishings for these rooms, including a set of furniture that Duncan Phyfe made for Eliza Foote in 1838.

The most highly publicized aspect of the renewed interest in American art of the nineteenth century is the manner in which it has affected the art market. During the last decade increasing interest of private collectors and museums has gradually pushed prices to new records, especially for major works of the Hudson River school, as well as those of painters such as Bingham, Mount, Homer, and Eakins. The entire Karolik collection of nearly 250 paintings was assembled in the 1940s at a cost of less than \$250,000, which is just about what one painting in the collection, Bingham's *Wood-boatmen on a River*, would bring if it came on the market today.

A dozen years ago Cole's famous series, *The Voyage of Life*, was offered to the Metropolitan for \$10,000. The Museum turned the four pictures down because it already owned six by Cole; but in so doing it rejected one of the major artistic monuments of the nineteenth century, which would easily bring today between one half and three quarters of a million dollars. When Cole's *Pic-Nic* appeared on the market in 1967, it commanded what was then a staggering sum, slightly more than \$100,000; but I suspect that now the picture could easily be sold at several times that price. Frederic Church's panoramic *The Andes of Ecuador*, which was painted for William Henry Osborne, remained in the possession of his descendants until 1965 when it was sold to a New York collector for close to \$30,000, a seemingly

astronomical sum since earlier that year Church's *Rainy Season in the Tropics* had brought only \$10,000. In 1966 *The Andes* was resold for \$65,000. Today either canvas could easily fetch close to \$200,000.

The retrospective exhibitions of such artists as Cole and Mount account in part for the dramatic increase in the prices of these and other artists. Of the sixty-one Coles included in the recent exhibition, a selection of the best of the artist's works, only thirteen are still privately owned. Of that number, only two or three rank with the greatest of Cole's pictures, and one of those is at this moment before the board of one of our major museums. With Mount the situation is even more dramatic. Of the forty-four oils in the 1969 catalogue, only two are still in private hands, and of these, only one is of the first rank. We have, in other words, reached a point where very few works by the leading American painters of the nineteenth century still remain outside of public collections. With an ever diminishing supply and an ever increasing demand, prices have inevitably climbed to levels not anticipated even just a few years ago. In this context, it is difficult to judge the further impact of the publication of a list of twenty-two eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American artists that are wanted for the permanent collections of the White House.

Certain of the decorative arts of the nineteenth century have also shown enormous gains in value. American silver of the early part of the century, long ignored by a public told that only eighteenth-century American silver was of any quality or value, has now been subjected to considerable study and is in great demand. When a silver urn made for Daniel Webster about 1825 to 1830 appeared in a Parke-Bernet sale in 1942, the galleries did not think it important enough to record the mark of the Philadelphia firm of Fletcher and Gardiner. The piece sold for \$115. Just a year or so ago the urn reappeared at public sale and brought nearly twenty-five times that 1942 price. Tiffany favrile glass and lamps with leaded shades, which for a long while represented the most dated and unfashionable aspect of decorative arts, are now among the most popular. Tiffany vases that brought \$200 to \$300 a decade ago often command upward of \$5,000 today, and certain rare leaded lamps, including the famous *Wisteria*, have recently brought close to \$20,000.

Taste is as ephemeral as time. So are works of art. We are the posthumous public of the nineteenth-century artists, who played so significant a role in establishing the face of America. Historically, we have done a mediocre job in preserving for posterity the best of what the nineteenth century left to us. Much of the best has already passed to dust — but it must be our goal to see that what remains is preserved for our children and their children, so that they shall have some better idea of where we have been — and of where we are going.



1. **The Faithful Colt, 1890. William Michael Harnett.** Oil on canvas, 23 x 19 inches. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection, 1935.236.



3. **Old Time Letter Rack (formerly Old Scraps), 1894. John Frederick Peto.** Oil on canvas, 30 x 25½ inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller. This painting bears a fake signature of William Michael Harnett, to whom it was long attributed.



2. **Old Companions, 1904. John Frederick Peto.** Oil on canvas, 22 x 31 inches. Collection of Ambassador and Mrs. J. William Middendorf II, New York.



4. **The Deluge, 1813.** Joshua Shaw. Oil on canvas, 48 x 66 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of William Merritt Chase, 09.14. For more than fifty years, this painting was erroneously attributed to Washington Allston.

5. **Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea, 1804.** Washington Allston. Oil on canvas, 38½ x 51 inches. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Everett Fund, 78.46.





6. **Landscape, about 1850-1860. Attributed to Jerome B. Thompson.** Oil on canvas, 41 x 50½ inches. The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Because of a false signature of William Sidney Mount, this picture was attributed to him for more than half a century.

7. **The Haymakers, Mount Mansfield, Vermont, 1859. Jerome B. Thompson.** Oil on canvas, 30 x 50 inches. Private collection. Photograph: Helga Photo Studio.





8. Picnic in the Catskills, 1819 (?).
Unknown American artist. Oil on
canvas, 48 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 34 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.
The Brooklyn Museum, Gift of
Charles A. Schierin, 13.73. This
picture has long been considered a
Catskill landscape by Henry
Inman; but the date of 1819
precludes this possibility, and
there is no reason to believe the
subject is a scene in the Catskills.

9. Dismissal of School on an October
Afternoon, about 1828. Henry
Inman. Oil on canvas, 26 x 36
inches. Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston, M. & M. Karolik
Collection, 48.432.



10. Restoration of a pediment of a corner pavilion, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.





11. The Great Hall of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1906. Richard Morris Hunt and Richard Howland Hunt. Completed 1903.



12. The Great Hall of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1971. Photograph: Robert Gray.

Design and Chaos: Some Heretical Conjectures about the Artist and the Public in America

In the last report he wrote as president of the Carnegie Corporation, John Gardner told a story that has haunted me ever since. It was the story of a little girl in school who was drawing a picture. The teacher, looking down over Mary's sedulously bent head and intent shoulder, asked her what she was drawing. "A picture of God," Mary replied. "But, Mary," the teacher protested, as teachers seem always to do, "no one knows what God looks like." "They will," said Mary, undaunted, "when I get through."

All of us, I suppose, have moments when we almost share Mary's joyous confidence in a private insight, but our teachers — paid and unpaid — have taught us to be wary of confidence, and of joy, too, for that matter. So, for the most part, if we want our ideas to be taken seriously, we try to keep within the bounds of our specialties as chemists, bird watchers, sociologists, drag racers, theologians, art historians, or whatever our associates acknowledge us to be.

I am generally, if not wholeheartedly, acknowledged to be a professor of English, not an art historian. But like most people, I am not quite willing to be bounded by the limits of a specialty. However aware we may be of the hazards involved in conjectures based only on an amateur's miscellany of knowledge, we are equally aware that such conjecturing occasionally enables us to glimpse, momentarily at least, the truth contained in one of Emerson's engagingly homely metaphors. "It is necessary," Emerson said in "Natural History of Intellect" about a century ago, "to suppose that every hose in nature fits every hydrant. Were it not so, chaos must be forever."

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Other passages in Emerson's lecture make it clear that he was acknowledging here the "tyrannical instinct of the mind" that repudiates the idea of chaos and compels us to look for patterns of relationship among the diverse phenomena by which we are surrounded. All of us, I think, are conscious of this tyrannical instinct of our minds. We know that where we perceive no patterns of relationship, no design, we discover no meaning. If the items of information we acquire from news broadcasts, books, and other sources lie around in our minds, unrelated to one another and to our everyday experience, they constitute a pointless and boring miscellany. But the moment our minds go to work on these apparently unrelated items, and we start fitting them together, they become interesting. Over the years I have tried to fit together what I know about nineteenth-century American literature with what I have been able to learn about American art and other aspects of American civilization. In asking you to follow me through some rather complex speculations about the influence of the public on American artists, I do so as an amateur. I shall travel by a somewhat circuitous route, but I know of no other way to arrive at the promised land.

The reason apparently unrelated things become interesting when we start fitting them together is that the mind's characteristic employment is the discovery of meaning, the discovery of design. The search for design, indeed, underlies all arts and all sciences. The forms created by the artist, like the formulas (the "little forms") of the scientist, are symbolic records embodying the design, or meaning, their creators have perceived. The root meaning of the word *art* is, significantly enough, "to join, to fit together." All artists are, etymologically at least, joiners. The delight we derive from the artist's forms is largely, I think, a delight in the revelation of how things fit together — of the ways in which the Emersonian hoses fit the hydrants. The enjoyment of the arts, like the enjoyment of the elegance of a scientific theorem, is a natural response to symbolic structures revealing perceived relationships, or designs, in the phenomena of human life and in the phenomena of the universe, which is our dwelling place.

Yet it is a curious fact and one that has not, so far as I know, been commented on, that most, if not all of the words we use in talking about these enjoyable patterns of relationship have somewhat sinister overtones. The word *design* itself curdles in many contexts. It will function inoffensively enough in a discussion of the decorations on a morocco leather wallet I carry; but if someone suddenly said there were designs on my wallet, I might clap a protective hand to my trouser pocket. The noun *order* goes abruptly sour when we put it in the plural; to give order may be commendable, but to give orders is somehow arrogant and unendearing. Even in the singular it is currently suspect in such a phrase as "law and order." In literary discussions we talk about the *plots* of novels, and about rhyme *schemes*,

but in other contexts plots and schemes are disreputable things. And the word *fiction*, of course, is at once the name of one of the principal forms of literature and a euphemism for a lie.

Similarly, in discussing the constructive arts, we use such verbs as *fabricate*, *frame*, *engineer*, and *forge*, and nouns such as *artifice*, *contrivance*, and *device* — all of which in other contexts have an aura of fraudulence hovering about them. Even the word *form*, and such derivatives as *formal* and *formula*, are tainted, as when we speak of the formulas of politeness or of doing something for form's sake. Indeed, the words *art* and *craft* refer to chicanery and deceit almost as often as they designate the making or doing of things whose design and form give pleasure.

Evidently, the language we use in talking about the arts is haunted by a latent mistrust and uneasiness. Many of the terms we employ in discussing form and design are readily convertible into terms suggesting duplicity or downright fraud. The fact that this is apparently a spontaneous development in language suggests that it has a profound, if covert, significance — especially since, in our conscious thinking about literature, painting, sculpture, music, and architecture, we recognize the pattern-revealing activity embodied in their forms and designs as the principal source of our delight. Perhaps, if we re-examine the nature and function of design, we may get some understanding of the paradox involved in our unconscious distrust of the very things in art that delight us most. And in the process we may gain some fresh insights into the relation between the arts and life, between the artist and the public.

Let me begin by reminding you of a familiar truth: design, or form, in the arts is achieved by selection. The artist selects certain details out of the vast flux of his total experience and joins, or arranges, those details in what Suzanne Langer calls “a perceptible, self-identical whole” expressive of human feeling. The act of selection is, for all the arts, primordial. Life, as Henry James rather patronizingly wrote to his fellow novelist H. G. Wells, is “all inclusion and confusion”; art “all discrimination and selection.”

The design, or expressive form, of a novel, for instance, is the result of a number of selective and interpretive processes, starting with the selection of the particular items in this area that can be ordered in an effective way. So, too, in the visual arts. “A picture,” Degas said, “is something which requires as much knavery, trickery and deceit as the perpetration of a crime The artist does not draw what he sees, but what he must make others see.” To understand what Degas meant, one has only to look at such a picture as his *Dancer with a Bouquet* (figure 1). This is, overtly, a view of a stage, upon which we look down from one of the boxes in which a lady sits, at the lower right corner of the picture, holding an open fan. The fan cuts off our view of the ballerina's legs, just as it might cut off the view of a

gentleman sitting behind the lady in the box. Everything seems very intimate and real. But the knavery here is how Degas forces us to see and respond to the dark convex curve of the fan as the inverted, negative echo of the white concave curve of the ballerina's tutu, which it intersects, and also of the curves of the ballerina's bouquet and the similar arc plotted by the feet of the grouped dancers behind the ballerina. What Degas forces us to see is, in other words, not a bouquet or a ballerina but design.

The ultimate form of all works of art is prescribed not by the way things actually occurred in the writer's or painter's experience, but by the design, which is to say, the meaning he discovered in the experience; much as the form of a geologist's theory is determined not by the position of fossil-bearing strata as he finds them at present in nature, but by the meaning he perceives in their relationship to one another and to other geologic evidence. That meaning, that design, is determined by the artist's cerebral activities, not by his immediate sensory responses to actuality.

This does not, of course, mean that literature or any other art is primarily a cerebral pursuit. On the contrary, the function of literature and the other arts is primarily to arouse and direct feelings. Even the kind of literature deeply concerned with ideas is shaped first of all by the author's feelings about those ideas. Its literary function, its function as a work of art, is primarily to elicit and control the reader's emotional response to those ideas. Hence it is that a literary work concerned with ideas we no longer hold — for example, Milton's *Paradise Lost* — nevertheless retains its value as literature. Something analogous to this must be true of architecture, painting, and the other arts, else we cannot account for the persisting appeal of structures such as Notre Dame of Paris and the pyramids of the Aztecs, or of pictorial compositions as divergent as Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* and Thomas Cole's great series of paintings, *The Voyage of Life*.

But though works of art are forms expressive of human feeling, they are not forms evolved by human feeling. T. S. Eliot said of poetry, in his essay "The Function of Criticism," that the largest part of the labor in creating it is the intellectual or cerebral part. Eliot called this "the frightful toil" of "sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing," but he meant the same thing that Degas meant when he talked of "knavery, trickery and deceit." At times, apparently, these complexly related constructive activities are carried on less painfully than at others; Robert Frost once spoke of the ease with which his lyric "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" shaped itself in his mind. Yet the surviving manuscript of the poem indicates that the job of selecting and ordering the elements going into it was not quite so simple as Frost liked to remember. Many a painting whose composition seems inevitable in its rightness reveals under X-ray or infrared photography the labor with which its original elements were recomposed. The truth seems

to be that the elements of actuality, even when carefully preselected, are recalcitrant to order.

But the mind demands order. There is a great deal of recent scientific evidence of this tyrannical instinct of the mind. In 1965 at the Center for Cognitive studies, Harvard University, people were asked to memorize four different kinds of word sequences: normal English sentences; anomalous sentences having the grammatical structure of normal sentences but no meaning; anagram sentences, having the same words as the normal sentences but in ungrammatical sequence; and haphazard strings of words. As one would expect, the normal sentences proved to be the easiest to memorize, and the haphazard strings of words the hardest. But what interested me in the report on the experiment, published in the Carnegie Corporation's *Quarterly*, were these statements: "In trying to repeat sentences which are grammatical but meaningless, people tend to introduce other words which *give* meaning; in trying to repeat ungrammatical sentences, they tend to invert the word order (that is, make it correct)." Thus, the experimenters conclude, people "err on the side of making their responses more meaningful and grammatical than the materials presented to them — if to seek meaning and order is to err." (Note that the writer cannot quite bring himself to consider the production of order as erroneous, even when the whole point was to reproduce disorder.)

What the investigators at Harvard noticed was essentially the same thing that W. M. Ivins, Jr., the curator of prints here at the Metropolitan for many years, observed more than a decade earlier in his enlightening book *Prints and Visual Communication* (1953) — a book, by the way, that has not yet received adequate attention from those concerned with the nature of the visual arts. Ivins was concerned with the ways in which pictorial reproductions affect our ways of seeing and even our ways of thinking. At one point he considers the pictures of plants appearing in the numerous herbals published from 1480 to 1526. The illustrations in the first of these printed herbals were woodcut copies of hand-drawn illustrations in a ninth-century botanical manuscript, which, in turn, were the final step in a long series of copies of copies of copies that went back to original drawings made by some Greek botanists. The woodcut illustrations in the first printed herbal were then copied for publication in later books, and those in turn were copied, and so on. If this long series of copies of copies of copies is arranged in chronological order, Ivins tells us, they clearly reveal what he concluded to be a basic human characteristic. So long as the illustrators did not return to the original plants as sources of information, but confined themselves to such knowledge as they could abstract from earlier pictures, they overlooked or disregarded "what appeared to them to be mere irrationalities in the pictorial accounts given by their predecessors." They rationalized their drawings, and this rationalization "most frequently took the form of an endeavor for

symmetry,” resulting in a balanced arrangement of parts and forms. Ivins wryly observes that this rationalizing process, “however satisfying to mental habits, resulted in a very complete misrepresentation of the actual facts.”

It is interesting to remind ourselves that art has generally been admired for its capacity to do precisely what produced the “errors” in the Harvard experiments and the “misrepresentation” in the herbal woodcuts. Proclus, writing in the fifth century, asserted: “He who takes for his model such forms as nature produces, and confines himself to an exact imitation of them, will never attain to what is perfectly beautiful. For the works of nature are full of disproportion, and fall very short of the true standard of beauty.” And early in the sixteenth century in his introduction to the *Book on Human Proportions*, Albrecht Dürer said: “We like to behold beautiful things, for this gives us joy.” Therefore, if the artist has to make a figure, he should make it as beautiful as he can. But Dürer added: “No single man can be taken as a model for a perfect figure, for no man lives on earth who is endowed with complete beauty . . . You therefore, if you desire to compose a fine figure, must take the head from some and the chest, arm, leg, hand, and foot from others, and, likewise, search through all members of every kind.” In the late eighteenth century, in *Discourses*, Sir Joshua Reynolds said essentially the same thing: “All the objects which are exhibited to our view by nature, upon close examination will be found to have their blemishes and defects.” It is the artist’s job, Sir Joshua concluded, to learn “to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences, and deformities of things, from their general figures,” and thus be able to perceive “an abstract idea of their form more perfect than any one original.”

By these quotations spanning thirteen centuries I hope to establish the point that the order achieved in a work of art, or what Aristotle, long before Coleridge, called its organic unity, has almost universally been conceived of as an order imposed upon it by the mind of man, not derived from actuality. The fine arts as well as the practical arts have been felt to be a conquest of nature. Vasari, four hundred years ago, spoke admiringly of how the painters, sculptors, and architects had almost vanquished nature, and of how they triumphed over it. In our own century Geoffrey Scott, in his influential book *The Architecture of Humanism* (1924), talks of the arts as a means of projecting the image of our own distinctively human functions upon the outside world, thus creating “that coherence which the beauty of Nature lacks.”

The idea that coherence is the primary quality of artistic order, and is achieved only by selection, is implicit in Scott’s assertion that architectural style subordinates beauty to the mind’s pattern, “and so selects what it presents that all, at one sole act of thought, is found intelligible, and every part re-echoes, explains, and reinforces the beauty of the whole.” This will not sound strange to anyone familiar

with Coleridge's often quoted definition of a poem as the species of composition that proposes to give "such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part," which, of course, requires that all the parts "mutually support and explain each other."

Coleridge's ideal of organic unity has, in various guises, dominated a good deal of criticism of the arts, and much of artistic practice, for the past one hundred and fifty years, and has cooperated with other forces that tend to free art from any obligations to nature or objective reality. In the philosophy of aesthetics, Suzanne Langer has reached the point, in her *Philosophical Sketches* (1962), of insisting a work of art is to be judged solely as an appearance, "as an apparition given to our perception," and "not as a comment on things beyond it in the world, or as a reminder of them." Works of art, Miss Langer concedes, are symbols formulating our ideas of inward experience, but she says a work of art differs from other symbols because "it does not point beyond itself to something else," to things or facts in the outside world. Similarly, Northrup Frye maintains that in "pure" poetry the words are to be considered solely in their relations with one another, not in their relations to their customary meanings, and that the world of the poem should be "closed and self-sufficient, being the pure system of the ornaments and the chances of language." And we all have experienced the excitement, and perhaps the consternation, of contemporary paintings that are also closed and self-sufficient forms, disinfected of all comment on things beyond them in the world.

Yet, as the critic Donald Davie pointed out in *Articulate Energy* (1958), there are many poems that delight us precisely because they are open to another world, and because their syntax, or structure, refers to and mimes "something outside itself and outside the world of [the] poem, something that smells of the human, of generation and hence of corruption." What is true of these poems is true of many architectural works, many paintings, and many musical compositions as well. But by and large, artistic structures of this sort have not appealed to the dominant critics of our time or to the contemporary arbiters of taste. Literary critics and art critics, and those of us who feel we ought to respond verbally to aesthetic experience and therefore pick up the critics' lingo, have generally found it easier to justify a preference for those designs that succeed in fusing their elements into a self-identical whole, in which every hose fits every hydrant, and in which nothing is left at loose ends to raise questions answerable only by appealing to something outside the work of art. A novel, a painting, or a piece of sculpture whose design is open, in Miss Langer's sense, is impure art, and thus of course inferior art.

Interestingly enough, however, in all the arts failures of this sort are often successes. I was reminded of this by an article published in 1958 in *American Quarterly*, in which Aerol Arnold set out to explain to the benighted social scien-

tists that the meaning of a work of fiction is conveyed by its total structure, by its overall design, and that it is a mistake to detach from this design the political ideas, let us say, woven into it and to find in them the meaning of the novel or story.

The article dealt with the need to be aware of the structural integrity of a work of art, and what Arnold said about works of literary art can be said of paintings and musical compositions as well. The article analyzed specific works to show how novelists wrestle with their material, rewriting scenes to give them the proper tone, changing the order of scenes altogether — all in order to shape the raw material provided by actual experience so the meaning of the experience, not the experience itself, will be conveyed to the reader, and so all the questions raised by the elements of the fiction are answered.

But what if the structure of a particular work raises questions it does not answer? Arnold concedes that sometimes a piece of fiction is “hastily written or inadequately understood” by the writer, in which case the reader either does not believe the story or does not believe the writer’s explanation of events. As an example he cites F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “The Rich Boy.” The structure of this story, including its title, is designed to make the reader understand that what happens to its hero, including his loss of the beautiful heroine and all the miseries attendant upon that loss, happens because the hero is rich. But there are things in the story making it impossible for us to accept this explanation. We, as readers, know the hero’s trouble was simply that, rich or poor, he was incapable of accepting the obligations and responsibilities we know to be part of love and marriage.

Arnold therefore sees the story’s structure as inadequate, or inappropriate. Fitzgerald in this instance failed, he indicates, to do the intellectual part of his job; he did not complete the selecting, emphasizing, distorting, and arranging required to create a design capable of illuminating the significance of the aspects of life he had selected for presentation. By these standards “The Rich Boy” is bad art. “As we read and re-read Fitzgerald’s story,” Arnold says, “we do not believe the narrator’s explanation We recognize in [the hero] people we know in literature and in life and the individual we recognize by his actions in this story is not the individual the narrator explains.”

This analysis of “The Rich Boy” provokes an interesting question. Why, if the design of the story is so seriously flawed, does anyone enjoy it enough to “read and re-read” it? The answer, I think, is that we do indeed recognize in the hero “people we know in literature and life.” In other words, we enjoy the story precisely because the design of the story, in Miss Langer’s terms, points beyond itself to something in the world outside the story.

Does this not suggest that the design, or structure, of a work of art need not be quite so rational as our theories often assume? Does it not suggest that an effective

story, for instance, may include elements of actuality that get in inadvertently? And, still more disturbingly, does it not suggest that in some instances at least these inadvertent inclusions are the vital source of interest?

Such anomalous situations occur in all sorts of designs, even in such apparently scientific and mathematical structures as those of civil engineers. Most people, I assume, are familiar with the George Washington Bridge across the Hudson (figure 2). We can, I suppose, call to mind its essential form: the double-decked roadway depending from the transactive curve of huge cables slung from high steel towers at the water's edge on either side of the river.

These towers are, in a sense, the principal features in the total design of the bridge, and it is their design that illustrates my point. The basic units in the design are similar in appearance to what you would have if you formed a square out of four kitchen matches and then, within the square, made an X out of two crossed matches running diagonally from the corners. Four sets of twelve such X-ed squares, set on top of one another, make up each of the legs of the 635-foot towers, and other such squares join the two legs at the top of the towers and just beneath the roadways.

If you have been building the bridge towers in your mind's eye out of the X-ed squares, as I describe it, and if you remember that, in the actual bridge, at the lofty top of the opening through which the roadway pierces the towers, there is a curved arch, you may be wondering how the curve of the arch got into the design. If so, you have hit upon one of the elements in the design that raises questions the design itself does not and cannot answer.

That curve, which to many is one of the most pleasing elements in the design of the bridge towers, got in by the back door, as it were. It happened this way: When the bridge was designed in the late 1920s, the towers were conceived not merely as supports for the cables but as massive and monumental architectural features. The steel frame of the towers would, of course, hold up the cables and support the entire dead and live load of the completed bridge. But the necessary steel components, those X-ed squares, were not arranged by the engineer, O. H. Amman, solely with that end in view. For the towers were to be faced with granite, designed by Cass Gilbert, architect of the Woolworth Building. That is why the curved arch appears in the design; for although the waist that connects the two legs of the tower could be most efficiently formed of straight members, like those boxed X's, an opening as wide as that between the tower legs can be spanned with stones only by arranging them in an arch. Actually, since the stones employed in facing the steel towers would not have been carrying any weight but would have hung on the steelwork, they could have been carried straight across the opening as we carry bricks straight across the top of a fireplace by supporting them on an iron bar or

plate. But then it would not have *looked* like a stone tower. So the steel was curved to hold up the nonfunctioning arch of stones that was to be applied to it.

But as the huge steel skeletons rose from the shores of the Hudson, the unanticipated majesty of their mathematical lacework was so striking, so impressive, that there was a widespread protest against covering them with the granite shell they were supposed to support. Here, then, is an engineering structure whose design, like that of the Fitzgerald story, includes elements that raise questions the structure itself does not answer; yet the towers of this bridge have an aesthetic impact more stirring than those of other suspension bridges from whose design such irrelevant features have been eliminated.

The reason for this apparent anomaly is, I suspect, that no conceivable rational structure can be commensurate with the complexity and wonder of reality itself. And since all of us are ultimately interested in reality, we are sometimes, at least, glad to be referred to it. Because we have an appetite for all aspects of reality, we regard as great works of art those that are most inclusive and deal most profoundly with life — Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, Beethoven's third symphony.

There are times, of course, when life itself seems so bewilderingly or frighteningly complex and chaotic that we welcome the illusory tidiness of a fictional world where all questions are answered and the significance of everything is structurally understood. These are the moments when we prefer Henry James's *The Ambassadors* to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, or Mozart's thirty-ninth symphony to Beethoven's ninth. But when the illustration of stability and order is not so necessary to us, we are likely to find all but the very greatest works of art terribly limited. At such times we may feel less interest in a design perfectly adapted to an understanding of some segment of experience than we can feel in an imperfect one. For the imperfection of a design, the presence in it of elements raising questions the total design does not answer, is the very thing impelling us to look beyond the limits of the thing designed to the ultimate source of its elements — to life itself. To understand the hero of "The Rich Boy," for instance, we have to go outside the bounds of the story; we have to compare him with people we know. To understand the George Washington Bridge towers, we have to see their arches as symbols or signs pointing beyond themselves to facts of aesthetic habit in an irrelevant world of masonry construction.

In these terms, I think, we can account for the fact that commonly, when we are young and in good health and feel our energies are sufficient to cope with whatever chaos life presents, we think better of loosely organized vitality in the arts than we do when we get older. It is the relatively young, I observe, who most enjoy Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg in our day, just as it was the relatively young in an

earlier generation who were enraptured by Thomas Wolfe's timeless river of vitality. But all through our lives, fluctuating responses to the chaos of life as we experience it determine our fluctuating taste in such matters. At one moment we may prefer designs that inadvertently – or deliberately, as in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* – require us to go beyond them to life itself. At another moment we may prefer those in which the patterned relationship of selected elements of experience successfully creates the illusion of a world capable of answering all the questions it raises.

Recognition of this fact suggests that we might usefully differentiate between “closed” and “open” designs in the arts. In my present context I mean by closed forms those whose design answers all questions raised by the elements of experience they include. They are forms from which the artist has eliminated all irrelevant or inharmonious details. By open forms, on the other hand, I mean those comprising elements raising unanswered questions – elements the artist has been unable, or unwilling, either to expunge or to modify in such a way that they fit a self-consistent, or “self-identical,” design.

Walt Whitman, Melville, and Mark Twain are all authors whose works are open forms in this sense. And the conjunction of these three writers – the three who in retrospect seem most “American” of all our nineteenth-century authors, whether we use this term with approval or disapproval – suggests that the prevalence of open forms in American literature and in other arts as practiced or developed in America might be worth considering.

Whitman repeatedly insisted that his book sought only “to put you in rapport. Your own brain, heart, evolution must,” he said, “not only understand the matter, but largely supply it.” So, too, Melville, who in *Pierre* succinctly stated an idea that he developed extensively in *The Confidence Man* and restated at the end of his creative life in *Billy Budd*. Though common novels, he wrote, “spin veils of mystery, only to complacently clear them up at last,” the more profound books “never unravel their own intricacies, and have no proper endings.” So much for those who are querulous about the imperfect and unanticipated ending of *Moby Dick*, or of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.

For the moment, I can only mention such things as the panoramic style in American landscape painting, with its wide-angle view and shifting vanishing point, exemplified in the Metropolitan's exhibition by Thomas Cole's *The Oxbow*, Frederic Edwin Church's *Heart of the Andes*, and Martin Johnson Heade's *Thunderstorm, Narragansett Bay*. I can only remind you of the many American still-life paintings in which all the objects rest upon tables whose ends are out of sight, although European still lifes are assembled on the surface of tables whose ends are part of the design. I cannot develop here the insight I borrow from Barbara Novak's

recent book, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* (1969), wherein she convincingly demonstrates that the dominant quality in nineteenth-century American painting was the fixation of a single moment in time, as in Winslow Homer's work, the almost photographically-stopped motion of Thomas Eakins's Max Schmitt in a Single Scull, and the "frozen continuum" of the luminist painters such as Heade and Fitz Hugh Lane. This obsession with absolutes in time and space, with "the clear, the measurable, the palpable," testifies, as Miss Novak at one point suggests, to the almost terrifying awareness of flux and process in the American consciousness. Only in an environment permeated with this awareness would the compulsion to freeze time and motion become a formal obsession. And the resulting forms inevitably include elements raising questions unanswered by the composition itself: frozen wave crests that do not fall onto beaches, oarmarks left at regular intervals in the Schuylkill's water, and other symbols of a flux and movement going on outside the timeless and motionless world of the painting, in the world of reality itself.

In her final chapter Miss Novak speaks of the surprising predilection for futurist motion in twentieth-century American paintings such as John Marin's. But there has been a long tradition of interest in the visual portrayal or revelation of motion in photography and in other pictorial media unembarrassed by affiliation with the fine arts. Linear records of the complex movements of rolling and pitching ships were published in *Harper's Magazine* in the 1850s — pictures having more in common with those of the twentieth century, like Kandinsky's and Klee's, than with those of Homer and Eakins. And Eakins himself had, of course, contributed to the development of motion-picture cameras. In our own times this interest in motion has been developed not only in movies but also in jazz, the comic strip, the skyscraper, and television shows like "Open End."

This concept of closed and open forms in the arts is related, I think, to the latent mistrust of design which, as I pointed out earlier, lurks behind the words we use in talking about it. The mistrust, I suspect, expresses our unconscious awareness of the fact that in a very real sense all the perfectly patterned relationships the artist seeks to symbolize in design are in an ultimate sense untrue, and in a profound sense, anti-life. The forms of art and the formulas of science all attempt to reduce experience to some sort of order capable of being represented by a symbolic structure. The symbols may be those of a chemical formula or the words of a poem, the terms of philosophic discourse or the forms defined by pigments on the painter's canvas, the rhythmic and tonal patterns of a symphony or the structural units of a bridge. But in every case they are arranged, insofar as our intellects can manage them, to symbolize a balanced and symmetrically ordered reality.

There is, or seems to be, something about the human mind that is affronted by

chaos. Our minds are evidently so constructed that they want to impose a symmetrical structure upon the elements of experience reported to them by our senses. The idea of symmetry is embodied in all the historical principles of art, such as proportion, harmony, unity, and balance, as well as in the scientific principles of the conservation of mass and the conservation of energy. So strong is the mind's bent for order that man has generally conceived the structure of reality itself, cosmic or molecular, to be symmetrical.

There seems to be increasing scientific evidence, however, to undermine our notions of nature's universal symmetry. Almost ninety years ago, Louis Pasteur experimented with the living organisms causing certain fermentations, and in the process became convinced of the sharply defined difference between the chemistry of living matter and that of dead matter. The molecular structure of living matter was asymmetrical, he said; that of dead matter was symmetrical. Contrary to man's traditional assumptions, he told the French Academy, life appeared to him to be dominated by asymmetrical actions. Life was, he conjectured, "a function of the asymmetry of the universe, or of the consequences that follow from it. *The universe is asymmetrical.*"

Although I am not qualified to describe or evaluate any scientific evidence for or against Pasteur's conception, I note that René Dubos, considered one of the greatest living biologists, says recent discoveries have led scientists generally to accept the notion that the structure of the universe is, as Pasteur presumed it was, asymmetrical.

Even in the field of mathematics the old certainties have been disturbed, since a young Austrian mathematician, Kurt Gödel, proved as long ago as 1931 what Jacob Bronowski recently called "two remarkable and remarkably unwelcome theorems," which added up to the assertion that "a logical system that has any richness can never be complete" and furthermore "cannot be guaranteed to be consistent." The mathematical logic of Gödel and his successors in England, America, and Poland has apparently demonstrated that there cannot be a universal description of nature in a single, closed, consistent scientific language. Bronowski's lecture on "The Logic of the Mind," delivered before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1965, means, if I understand it properly, that the tendency of the human mind to conceive of reality as a mathematically self-consistent, unified, and closed system is simply not consistent with the random asymmetry of reality itself.

If we accept this conclusion, we must, I suppose, conceive of existence as some sort of process maintaining an unstable equilibrium between contrary tendencies. In the realm of inorganic matter there is apparently a universal tendency toward the decrease of asymmetry, a tendency exemplified in the growth of crystals. In the organic realm, however, there is a countervailing tendency to maintain the tensions

of asymmetry. Life is a process of sustaining relationships; and those relationships cannot be separated out from the process, as a crystal can be removed from the solution in which it grows, without interrupting the process, without causing death. The asymmetry of living structures cannot be stabilized and contemplated in static isolation from the process sustaining it.

Regarded in this light, the term "organic form" as applied to the arts from the time of Coleridge to that of Frank Lloyd Wright embodies an absurdity. For the moment that we extract certain elements from an organic process they cease to be organic; no pattern in which we can arrange such extracted elements can itself be organic. The relatively stable and symmetrical form that the artist's mind ineluctably imposes upon these elements cannot symbolize the asymmetrical tensions of the organic process from which they have been fatally abstracted. The most it can do is symbolize some relatively stable and symmetrical truth perceived by the artist in a particular phase of the process — a process that ceased, let us remember, the moment he abstracted from it the elements he fitted together to form the symbol of his perception.

From one point of view, then, the mind's tendency to symbolize our experience of life in the closed, symmetrical forms and formulas of the arts and sciences is inherently anti-life. The creation of artistic form is to some degree a way of saying "Stop the world; I want to get off."

From this point of view one can understand why Henry James, of all American novelists the most ascetically preoccupied with form, seemed to Sherwood Anderson to be "the novelist of the haters." Anderson himself was, of course, a writer of very moving fiction, as readers of *Winesburg, Ohio* know. Like most of the books we recognize as distinctly American in quality, *Winesburg* is a hard one to classify. Certainly it is not a novel in the traditional sense. In his memoirs, Anderson said he felt that in some important way "the novel form does not fit an American writer. What is wanted is a new looseness." In *Winesburg*, he added, "I . . . made my own form." Elsewhere he elaborated on this idea of looseness in words that clearly relate it to the conception of open forms set forth earlier. "In the more compact novel form I have never been comfortable," he wrote; "life itself is a loose flowing thing. There are no plot stories in life."

What some literary critics decry as the formlessness of Anderson's fiction was thus the result of a deliberate effort on his part to devise a form open enough to let life flow through it unimpeded — to accommodate "lives flowing past each other," as he put it. To be sure, he wanted the form to possess structural integrity sufficient to convey "a definite impression," by which he meant, I assume, that he wanted it to symbolize accurately his momentary perception of the significance of the flow of life about him. But he did not want the form to be closed in a way that would

restrict the flowing life whose meaning he was incessantly trying to comprehend and reveal.

The Jamesian impulse to create a closed symbolic structure, which Anderson thus deliberately renounced, seems clearly to embody the will to attain a degree of stability and symmetry incompatible with life. Therein, it seems to me, lies the explanation of man's subconscious uneasiness about design and plot and scheme. Therein also, I suspect, lies the explanation of the deep-rooted distrust of the sciences expressed in the popular fantasy of the Frankenstein monster. Therein, perhaps, lies the real significance of the anti-intellectualism that seems especially conspicuous now but has always been more or less with us. It was Melville who said in a letter to Hawthorne more than a century ago, "To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with his head. The reason the mass of men fear God and *at bottom dislike* Him, is because they rather distrust His heart, and fancy Him all brain like a watch."

The structures of art, as well as those of science, are, as we have seen, the creations of men's minds. But the individual artist or scientist is not merely a cerebral cortex. Like other men, artists and scientists have highly developed transmissive nervous systems constantly assaulting the mind with signals from the chaotic asymmetry of life's and nature's elemental energies. The scientist handles these signals differently than the artist, to be sure. Thanks to his laboratory procedures the nerve signals his mind receives can be more narrowly channeled than those the artist's mind must cope with; and because they are more narrowly channeled they are more systematically referable to the recording and conceptualizing activities of the cerebral cortex. The signals received by the artist's brain are perhaps less manageable because less systematically preselected. But, in either case, these nerve signals from chaos batter more or less continuously at the symmetrical structures the mind creates in its unceasing effort to reduce that chaos to order. No order conceived by the mind and expressed in a symmetrical symbolic design can permanently withstand the assault.

Thus artists and scientists alike not only reject the forms and formulas of their immediate predecessors, but also, in the course of their own lifetimes, reject the designs they themselves formerly created. If they do not do so, they know, as do we, that as artists, as scientists, they are dead.

We say artists and scientists lose themselves in their work, but happily we speak in romantic hyperbole. For he who lost his life in this way would not thereby save it in eternal form. No symbolic design devised by the mind of man is eternal. Nothing is eternal except the unknowable form of eternity itself, and we do not live into eternity; we die into it. So long as the artist or scientist is alive, the flooding intuitions of reality contravene the symbolic orders his mind successively designs.

These conjectures about the nature of design seem to provide some basis for understanding why it is the closed forms authoritarian regimes have been willing to tolerate and even encourage from the time of the Pharaohs to those of Stalin and Hitler. A chart of developments in Russian architecture and painting since 1917 would, I think, quite accurately reflect the varying intensities of the Soviet government's repressive activities, as would a chart of the regime's attitudes toward the American jazz enjoyed by Russian young people.

These conjectures also seem to me to make some sort of sense out of recent developments in American art. I am thinking of the "happenings" in the theater; the "chance" choreography of Merce Cunningham's dance company — performances that do not begin, develop, and end in traditional form but simply start at an apparently random point and after a while stop. I am thinking, too, of all the various forms of what is coming to be known as "art *povera*": the "anti-form art," the "process art," the "random art," and the "earthwork art" of men such as Bill Bollinger, art forms strictly proscribing the sense of being something closed off from the rest of nature, or framed. As the young sculptor Patricia Johanson said in a letter to me: "Some 'vanishing point' sculpture is really about traveling from one place to another, since each part is virtually out of sight of all the rest."

The artists working in these forms are all reacting against what Harold Rosenberg calls "the formalistic over-refinement" in the art of the 1960s. (In the January 24, 1970, issue of *The New Yorker* Rosenberg discusses these trends as part of a movement whose central concept is "that the artist's idea or process is more important than his finished product.") On the West Coast we have the "funk art" of Bruce Connor and others who deliberately work in perishable materials. Connor, who is quoted in the *National Observer* for June 17, 1968, as saying "I don't care about being a part of history, only the present tense," once made a show out of food, big sandwiches and things. It opened and closed within two hours. "People came in and ate the art," Connor says; "I liked that."

Much of the vitality of contemporary design is finding expression in such experiments with open forms, even though, in quite understandable reaction against the prevailing chaos around us, popular designers such as Peter Max get rich by employing an arbitrary Rorschach blot type of symmetry to gratify our irrepressible hankering for the kind of repose and balance provided by the closed forms of traditional art.

In the light of these conjectures we can, it seems to me, profitably re-examine our cultural history, including the development of our architecture, sculpture, painting, literature, and music. In these terms it will be seen, I suspect, that the influence of the American public upon our artists was greater and more propitious than that of the patrons and tastemakers who conscientiously tried to be benefactors of Art

with a capital A. For it is true, I think, that the American public – to a greater extent than the public of another nation in the nineteenth century – gave free rein to the innate human mistrust of closed forms permeating the language we use in speaking of the arts. Hence the widespread public indifference and hostility to art despite the efforts of the custodians of culture. (Significantly, it was not until the frighteningly chaotic days of the great Depression, in the 1930s, that public acceptance of officially sponsored art became an important aspect of American life.) Hence also the “perpetual repudiation of the past,” to use Henry James’s phrase, characteristic of our civilization – a repudiation we can now see as life’s revenge upon aesthetic and cultural forms, which, insofar as they achieve a closed structure, embody an unconscious but nonetheless lethal will to subdue or set limits to life.

But the influence of the public on our artists has not been merely negative. At the same time that the public’s unawed and often contumacious distrust of closed forms discouraged those who sought to create or foster such forms, it also encouraged the creation and development of open forms in all sorts of vernacular areas of design not overshadowed by the tradition of the fine arts. To an extent that literary historians are just beginning to discover, the forms developed in popular newspaper journalism were exploited not only by Mark Twain but by Emerson, Whitman, and Melville as well. Art historians are now beginning to explore the relations between the work of painters like Mount, Homer, and Eakins and the forms and techniques of vernacular pictorial materials, in photography and in the cheap illustrated magazines and books made possible by the invention of high-speed presses and a new technology of picture reproduction. It is in such areas of investigation, I am convinced, that historians of American art will make their most exciting contributions in the next quarter-century.

Finally, these conjectures suggest that our arts and our sciences are more significantly interrelated than art historians and historians of science have yet made clear to one another and to the rest of us. To me, at least, it now seems clear that our artists and scientists during the nineteenth century were leagued, as they increasingly are, in the universal organic process by which nature maintains an unstable equilibrium between symmetry and asymmetry. For both the arts and the sciences, in their different ways, seek to impose order upon the elements of experience our senses report to our minds. Insofar as they succeed, they temporarily confine elements that will ceaselessly batter and eventually demolish the design imposed upon them.

The ultimate consequence of all design is therefore quite literally chaos – the violent eruption into randomness and asymmetry of energies that, for a time at least, have been forcibly restrained, even in the most open forms, by patterns of symbolic order. But this chaos, this ultimate consequence of design, is of course the

raw material of the artist and the scientist. It is the very stuff out of which, with this partial perception, he selects those details whose significance he strives to symbolize in design.

It is therefore time, I think, to turn inside out the hoary cliché that life is chaos, and to say instead that the wonderful and fearful asymmetry we call chaos begets life. Perhaps then we will perceive that, in spite of their professed allegiance to the ideals of order and symmetry, the greatest artists, writers, and scientists have always felt this to be so and have somehow found ways to let their commitment to life transcend their concern with form. Certainly this primal commitment governed the billions of people who, over the centuries, created the language in which we talk about art and everything else we care deeply about. For language itself, the greatest of all works of art, defies analysis in terms of any closed, symmetrical system of formal grammar and syntax, as the linguistics scholars are now quite ready to admit.

Perhaps if we bring to the surface our unavowed awareness of the vitality of chaos, we can reject the notion that the primary function of the arts must be to create closed forms of enduring order — however appropriate this notion may have seemed in the relatively static, hierarchical societies of the past. Perhaps then we can practice and enjoy the arts in the hopeful, if hazardous, assurance that it is their function in a dynamic free society to cooperate with chaos by creating open forms — forms honoring and passionately sustaining the unstable equilibrium between symmetry, which is death, and asymmetry, which is chaos. For this unstable equilibrium is life.



1. **Dancer with a Bouquet**, about 1878-1880. H.G.E. Degas. Pastel on paper, 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, 42.213.



2. **George Washington Bridge** over the Hudson River, New York, 1927-1931. O.H. Amman, engineer. View is toward the southwest before addition of second roadway.

Taste and Ideology:

Principles for a New American Art History

All learned gatherings face a common problem, caused by the fact that scholarly articles and spoken talks are two different things. Scholarly articles by their nature impose frequent pauses on the reader – to think over points made, to reflect on implications of the argument, to recall a train of thought diverted by necessary digressions into substantiating data, and so forth. Since such pauses cannot take place when a scholarly paper is read from the podium, audiences inevitably become confused and lose the train of thought being presented; boredom and frustration result. Conversely, talks composed and delivered colloquially enough to hold an audience's attention inevitably look superficial and overgeneralized when set down in print. The format of this article represents an attempt to do something about the problem, by preserving something of the character of my spoken talk with accompanying pairs of slides. For reasons completely out of my control, I was able to obtain only a few of the many illustrations mentioned here; none are reproduced. It is hoped that most of the subjects will be familiar to the reader.

The Metropolitan Museum was founded at the height of what we have come to call the Victorian era. Of course that age did not call itself Victorian, nor is there anything like total agreement on the designation even now. In fact, only within the last few decades, with the publication of studies like the late Carroll Meeks's on high Victorian picturesque eclecticism or Henry-Russell Hitchcock's *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain*, has there been widespread recognition of Victorian art and architecture as belonging to a distinct epoch within history and representing a historic style worthy of study.

Yet there can be few if any other periods in art history where so much is going on now and where so many new ideas are developing. What I propose to do is investigate some of the implications of these new ideas, especially with a view to setting American art and architecture in a broader context than heretofore.

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THE ARCHITECT'S DREAM,

Thomas Cole

Painted for Ithiel Town, Architect, in
1840.*The Toledo Museum of Art.*

Not many people nowadays still hold the common opinion of only a generation or two ago, that all eclectic styles are simply matters of taste, and that Victorian eclecticism is worth looking at chiefly as an example of how extremely misguided taste can be. The older idea of some incomprehensible "battle of the styles," so well represented in Cole's painting of the ideal architect dreaming of all the possible kinds of buildings he might revive from the past, is giving way to recognition that the different styles of the Victorian era — Greek revival, Roman revival, Gothic revival, and so on — have a meaningful common denominator. And it is generally agreed what that common denominator is — the principle of borrowing forms from past styles because of explicit association with particular ideas.

<p>MAISON CARREE, NIMES Built about 20-10 B.C., following prototypes in Rome.</p>	<p>STATE CAPITOL, RICHMOND VIRGINIA Designed by Thomas Jefferson 1784; construction begun August 1785; completed 1788.</p>
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Even people who cannot yet see that principle in later phases of Victorian art now generally concede it in the first. (For a definition of the three phases of early, high, and late Victorian, see my *Images of American Living*, 1964.) We can properly speak of Jefferson's State Capitol at Richmond as the first Victorian building, because in it this kind of explicitly symbolical borrowing first appears. (I limit myself here mainly to examples drawn from architecture, because, being the most collective of the arts, it shows collective symbolism best.)

It has long been obvious what motivated Jefferson to revive the Roman forms of the Maison Carrée for his State Capitol and therefore why that capitol is a valuable historical (as distinct from sentimental, patriotic, or artistic) document. Jefferson chose Roman forms because for him they were associated with the ideas of republics in general, and specifically called to mind the Roman republic. As Thomas

J. McCormick has pointed out in his studies of Clérisseau, Jefferson of course knew that technically the building was “erected in the time of the Caesars.” But like others in that age – Gibbon, for example – Jefferson took at face value Augustus’s claim to have restored the Roman republic. For him it was a symbol of republican institutions, and that is what counted. Since political forms of the Roman republic were allegedly being revived in the new United States, it seemed entirely appropriate to revive Roman architectural forms for her public buildings. Literally reproducing a Roman temple was not therefore a matter of Jefferson’s personal taste; actually, we happen to know that he personally preferred Louis Seize for his own furnishings. Nor was he concerned with physical, functional convenience; quite the reverse. If you deliberately set out to devise the most inconvenient type of building possible for a legislature, you could hardly do better than a windowless, airless, gallery-less Roman temple; and, in fact, to make the Maison Carrée work as a legislature building at all, Jefferson had to insert rows of cramped windows and put in a gallery, the gallery with such difficulty that it later collapsed with considerable loss of life. The one departure from his model that Jefferson did not have to make was in the order of the capitals; that he in fact substituted Ionic for the Maison Carrée’s Corinthian is merely an additional proof of how thoroughly symbolic his conception was – in this case following the tenets of Freemasonry, which taught that Ionic was the embodiment of wisdom and therefore suitable for a building housing legislators, in contrast to Corinthian, which embodied beauty and so presumably was not.

<p>UNITED STATES CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D. C. As completed by Latrobe in the 1820s.</p>	<p>PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, LONDON As designed by Pugin and Barry in the late 1830s; built largely in the 1840s.</p>
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If the ultimate function of Victorian architecture was to create symbolic images, then it must have been this function, rather than any national or personal aesthetic taste, that accounts for the varying popularity of different early Victorian revival styles in different countries. And that can be easily shown. For example, we all know that in the United States from 1800 until the Civil War, Roman or Greek styles were the overwhelmingly popular choice for capitols, courthouses, colleges, banks, stock exchanges, hotels, private houses – in short, for every kind of building in every part of the country – while the Gothic revival was restricted mainly to churches of Episcopal persuasion and a relatively few college buildings, cottages, and mansions built for people of nonconformist, if not eccentric, bent. During the

same period in Great Britain, it was the other way around. There, Gothic was the style of the Parliament Buildings, of public monuments, of country houses (counting Tudor and Elizabethan as variants), law courts, national schools, and so forth. There, it was the classical revivals that were restricted to more or less special circumstances — like the Royal High School, or Calton Hill Monument proclaiming Edinburgh to be the Athens of the North, or St. George’s Hall proclaiming Liverpool a center of culture. Why the difference? Obviously because different ideologies required different symbolic imagery. In the United States, where a new nation was being consolidated on the basis of a successful revolution dedicated, among other objectives, to recreating the Greek and Roman republics, classical revival forms projected a symbolic image of the new Establishment, while Gothic was associated with an older feudal order that had been repudiated. In Britain it was just the reverse. There, classical revival forms had limited popularity precisely because of their association with the revolutionary ideals of the United States and France, two powers with whom Britain had been at war for almost half a century before 1815; Gothic, by contrast, was associated with the ideal of a continuity between past and present, and so could express the very different national ideal of change without revolution, of “freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent,” as Tennyson put it.

<p>DESECRATION OF THE TOMBS OF ST-DENIS. Hubert Robert. Painted about 1792.</p>	<p>NAVE OF HEREFORD CATHEDRAL Begun about 1000; upper arcades restored by James Wyatt about 1790-1800.</p>
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It is no accidental coincidence that during the same 1790s when French revolutionaries were demolishing Cluny, desecrating St-Denis, and despoiling Notre-Dame in Paris to symbolize their break with the medieval past, James Wyatt was beginning his work of restoring cathedrals like Salisbury, Hereford, and Durham.

Nor is it accidental coincidence that at the same moment Napoleon’s neoclassical monuments were rising in Paris to proclaim his establishment of a new order, British intellectuals and aristocrats were everywhere proclaiming their solidarity with the old order by electing Gothic over Palladian as the preferred style for their country houses. Adoption of Gothic as the style for the new Parliament Buildings in London during the 1830s simply confirmed the already established role of revived medieval forms as images of that historical continuity by which national

<p>ARC DE TRIOMPHE DU CARROUSEL, PARIS</p> <p>Commissioned by Napoleon as one of many monuments projecting an image of his regime as legitimate successor to imperial Rome and the Holy Roman Empire. Designed by Chalgrin 1806; begun about 1808; completed 1836. Behind is part of the new Louvre, built by Napoleon III at mid-century as a symbolic image of <i>his</i> regime, legitimizing it by association with the glories of Louis Quatorze.</p>	<p>“ABBOTSFORD,” ROXBURGHSHIRE, SCOTLAND</p> <p>Designed about 1810 by William Atkinson; built about 1812-1815; enlarged in the 1820s as the home of Sir Walter Scott, whose first “medieval romance,” <i>Ivanhoe</i>, appeared in 1820.</p>
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institutions in nineteenth-century Britain were justified, and contrasted to the unstable revolutionary institutions of France and America.

This same principle, or course, applies not only to architecture but to every other art as well. Once understand that the function of revived medieval forms was to create a symbolic image of British nationalism, and you will realize that it was no accident that Tennyson should have written the nineteenth century’s great Arthurian epic; poems like “Idylls of the King” and Gothic revival buildings like the Houses of Parliament are both facets of a single symbolic image of British institutions descending unbroken from a misty medieval past. This same image is the distinctive characteristic of Turner’s work – ancient castles and towers on the Rhine, in Venice, on English hillsides, all painted “up-sun,” dissolved in timeless haze. Nor is it any accident that Constable first achieved popular success with his pictures of Salisbury Cathedral shrouded in its ancient elms. Nor that alongside the Gothic revival in architecture, a distinctive new linear drawing style filled with medieval allusions and borrowings should have been adopted by all the leading popular illustrators – Cruikshank, “Phiz,” Seymour, Doyle, Tenniel; these are all aspects of the same process of creating a symbolic national image.

Against this background, too, the sudden popularity in the same period of narrative easel pictures based on medieval themes becomes not only comprehensible but predictable. Keep in mind that the Royal Academy, as part of the Establishment, was expected to provide appropriate imagery for national ideals and to change that imagery if and when national ideals changed, and it will be self-evident why its second president, Benjamin West, should have abandoned the “Grand Man-

ner” of his mentor and predecessor, Joshua Reynolds, in favor of “Gothick” pictures. And so on.

<p>UNITED STATES CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D. C. As completed about 1855-1866, principally after the designs of Thomas U. Walter.</p>	<p>OLD PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, OTTAWA Commissioned 1859; begun 1861; completed by 1866. Main block designed by Thomas Fuller; destroyed by fire 1916. Wings designed by Frederick Warburton Stent.</p>
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Half a century later, differing ideologies were still determining national tastes. While the United States Capitol was being enlarged in even more grandiose Roman forms than before to re-emphasize American convictions and purposes in a time of civil strife (“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation . . .”), Gothic was being chosen as the style of the Canadian Parliament Buildings in Ottawa to emphasize continuity with Britain — continuity of the Old World with the New; and quasi-Gothic Anglican churches were rising in every corner of the second British Empire to image the same convictions.

All this follows naturally and easily enough from the premise that the function of Victorian revival styles was to set forth certain kinds of ideas through symbolic imagery. But there are more and much further-reaching implications than these.

For of course Victorians were not the first architects to be concerned with creating images that would proclaim those intellectual and social convictions on which established society depended. Far from it. Creating such images had been a basic function of the art of architecture since the beginning of history. The pyramids and the Pantheon, stupas and pagodas, Gothic cathedrals and baroque palaces all in their several ages proclaimed convictions of the Establishments that built them. Furthermore — and of transcendent importance — if the traditional function of architecture until modern times has been to make images of conviction, if it has been the art through which a given Establishment proclaimed its power and authority to the world, then we should not approach architectural history as if it were solely, or even largely, a record of personal artistic insights, of changing “styles” and preferences for forms on the part of talented individuals. Nor should we think of it as a passive or inherent reflection of the “spirit of its times” — assuming that

term has any meaning whatever. We must begin with the premise that the historic function of the art of architecture was to *create* the expression of its times, to set out in large, permanent, symbolic forms the convictions of leaders or rulers of society at any given time as to what national ideals should be. Or as Norris K. Smith put it so well in *Frank Lloyd Wright, A Study in Architectural Content* (1966):

According to Nikolaus Pevsner, "A bicycle shed is a building, Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture . . . The term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal." [Bruno] Zevi disputes this, contending, rightly enough, that a bicycle shed may be so designed as to be aesthetically appealing. But would this make it a work of architectural art? I think not, because it would still be unrelated to any area of institutional meaning. Palace, house, tomb, capitol, court, temple, church — these, mainly, are the buildings which stand for the institutionalized patterns of human relatedness that make possible the endurance of the city, or society, or of the state; and these have provided almost all the occasions for meaningful architectural art for the past five thousand years. They bear upon the realms of experience which have given rise to great quantities of painting and poetry; but one would be hard put to find either a painter or a poet who could make much out of the occasion of bicycle-parking. Nor can the architect endow it with significance.

If we talk of taste at all, we must assume that it is not a *cause* of successive architectural styles, but a *result* — that is, *a new style or set of forms does not come into wide use because people suddenly and mysteriously develop a "taste" for it; rather, people develop a taste for a certain new style or set of forms because it can be used to express political or social or religious convictions that they have come to approve of and hold.*

Of course at any time in history you can find individuals who hold convictions contrary to the majority, and whose art (if they create any) will be based on personal views rather than collective assumptions. This does not contradict the principle just stated; it simply means that dissenters' taste grows out of convictions different from those of the Establishment supporters. But I am not concerned here with that side issue. I am speaking about broad "tides of taste," the great basic swings of style — Romanesque to Gothic, Renaissance to baroque, and so on — which have traditionally been the central theme of art history. I maintain that such broad changes are not determined by personal aesthetic taste, but by shifts in social, political, philosophical, or religious convictions, which, as they gain ground, make new forms seem attractive and old forms repellent — first to individual precocious "leaders of taste" then to broad masses of people.

American arts are no exception to this principle. To understand how they change, we need to first understand what forces motivated changes in the basic convictions

on which American intellectual and political institutions rested in any given period. So, for example, it is meaningless to explain Roman revival architecture by saying: "People suddenly developed a taste for exact copies of Roman architecture, following Jefferson's (or anybody else's) lead." Nor is it enough to say: "There was an American Revolution dedicated to reincarnating the Roman republic, and therefore exact Roman architectural forms had a new appeal to American taste." We need to ask: "What precisely was the association of Roman political and artistic forms with American revolutionary ideals that made people dedicated to the Revolution find them so attractive as to want them copied exactly?" Or to phrase it by formula: "What changes in ideology determined changes in American taste at the time of the American Revolution, and later?" This puts the study of American art and architecture in an immensely broader context. It also, I think, shows how art history can be made the most ultimately meaningful of all humanistic studies.

Within the limits of this paper, it would be absurd to attempt any thoroughgoing analysis of a problem like this. I can only indicate sketchily the lines along which I think this new kind of art and architectural history ought to be constructed.

We must begin by seeing Victorian revival styles as part of a huge intellectual and spiritual movement — a new religion, really — that can be most succinctly described as an attempt to create heaven on earth. In various guises this movement has been the motivating force in history for many centuries. It was behind the attempt to achieve a perfect society through Papal supremacy in the middle ages, through a "godly prince" in the Renaissance, through a class-structured state in the baroque age. The phase of it that concerns us here, however, begins with the enormous shift that Paul Hazard called *la crise de la conscience européenne*, the watershed of the European mind, around the years 1685 to 1715, when for a wide variety of reasons it became fashionable to abandon the idea of man being a fallen creature in an imperfect world dependent on Grace for salvation, and instead to think of him as a naturally good being, capable of providing for himself here on earth the kind of happiness formerly thought possible only after death. All that frustrated this glorious vision was an inheritance of wicked institutions from the past, which obstructed expression of mankind's natural goodness and creativity. Abolish them, and the way would be clear to construct a perfect world.

What that perfect world would look like — in other words, the ultimate objective of the movement — varied as time went on. In fact the movement proceeded — and is proceeding, for it is still going on, as you can see by reading your daily newspapers or perhaps even looking out the window — in three quite distinct stages. I hope it will not be presumptuous to attempt to summarize them by means of the accompanying chart (pp. 164-165).

Here we see the three successive objectives, political equality, economic equality,

OBJECTIVE	ENERGY	MEANS	MODEL	TYPICAL ARTS OF PERSUASION RELATED TO THE MOVEMENT			TYPICAL IMAGES OF CONVICTION	ULTIMATE RESULTS
whose attainment will assure happiness for all and therefore must be destroyed	stands in the way of the objective and therefore must be destroyed	instrument by which obvious impossibility of the objective is to be overcome	cited to prove possibility of attaining new society by precedent	supporting preceding Establishment	by attacking the "enemy"	promoting new regime by propagandizing the "model"	architecture, sculpture, and painting, based on mass appeal, which illustrate and symbolize new ideals now realized in Establishment	never intended and seldom foreseen, but in retrospect inevitable, given actual nature of human beings
General characteristics of the entire movement common to all its stages, about 1650-present, deriving from basic assumption that mankind is part of nature and that both man and nature are intrinsically good								
to free natural goodness of mankind from all obstructions preventing its free expression; pursued by successive stages or ages, each "revolution" (turn abouts basic structure of society)	(a) immediate: all political, social, and economic institutions that limit individual freedom-- i.e., whatever "system," or "Establishment," or "state" is in power (b) long-range: all beliefs as taught by traditional world religions that heaven cannot be attained on earth	the "general will" (Rousseau). Man being naturally good, his collective decisions must always be right: hence will of majority (al supercedes all individual desires, and (b) constrains the collective which supercedes all absolutes, common laws, or super-naturally-based law "general will" infallibly recognizes and supports specific means for successive stages, as capitalism, applied science, psychiatric correction, etc.	varies with each successive stage; constant, however, in that into each successive model cited, visionaries read what they want to find, and overlook whatever disproves the case they want to make	baroque architecture and arts from Stage I of movement: heaven on earth through the class-structured state; revivals of these arts, especially in architecture and painting, after the mid-18th century chefs: archbishops: Napoleon III's Paris, Berlin under the Kaisers; the Ring in Vienna	ephemeral media: pamphlets, political cartoons, etc. arts whose imagery and style derives significance from the ideal world to come, not from the present one; hence "fine art," generally, and painting, after the mid-18th century	varied media and forms, implicitly or explicitly rejecting possibility of heaven on earth	derived from preceding arts of persuasion, whose themes and style have become fashionable thanks to principle of ideology determining taste; therefore vary from stage to stage (images of conviction from one stage necessarily function as persuasion against the next)	"broad general schemes for human improvement," turn out the reverse of what was intended, in order to free mankind, progressively greater force has to be employed. "since Nature has made men unequal, government must redress the balance" (Rousseau)
STAGE I: OLIGARCHIC germinates about 1600, from Reformation and Renaissance ideas, secularized mainly in through Revolution of 1689, which finally secularized principles of								
to appropriate principles of "divine right of kings" for an aristocracy, i.e., to claim for oligarchs the right to make laws, rather than being subject to laws, or for being subject to the best-- "rule of the ideal society"	Renaissance and baroque ideal of a class-structured state capped by a hereditary ruler supreme over all other classes principle of a state and monopoly of religion superordinating the Establishment	supremacy of Parliament-- in effect, supremacy of the aristocratic classes who control parliament through their ownership of land and monopoly of trading privileges	patrician Senate of Rome, which exiled Tarquin kings and laid foundations of Roman greatness, revived by Augustus as "constitutional monarchy"	→ Gothic cathedrals from Stage I of movement (heaven on earth through ecclesiastical supremacy) also function to a limited extent	pamphlets and philosophical treatises during War of Dutch Independence, Civil War in England attacking supremacy of king and the aristocracy supporting that regime political cartoons in Holland and England (Romeyn de Hooghe)	images of oligarchical society in group portraits, etc. by Hals, Rembrandt, etc. images of man happy in benevolent nature ("little masters": Ruysdael, Hobbema, Vermeer)	writings of Pascal, Wm. Law, Samuel Johnson, etc.; Handel's oratorios	The same principle of the "collective will of good men," which justified oligarchs supplanting kings, could also justify bourgeoisie supplanting aristocrats, proletariat supplanting bourgeoisie, etc. What was supposed to be a simple "coup d'état" turned out to be beginning of "continuous revolution." By abolishing right of oligarchs to make laws, and by abolishing above any human arrangement, a fundamental human freedom was lost.

and social equality, following each other roughly at intervals of a century. In each case there is an “enemy” — an obstructive institution — to be abolished. In each case there is a particular means whereby the new order is to be brought in. In each case a particular model is used as proof that the new order had once existed and so is no mere idle vision. And in each case the arts perform two broad sorts of social functions relative to the objective — persuasion or conviction.

Among the persuasive arts four types can be distinguished. Some arts persuade against the movement by perpetuating contrary convictions, as did the baroque architecture and painting that continued to be produced well into the nineteenth century wherever older visions of heaven on earth through the class-structured bureaucratic state still persisted in defiance of newer intellectual fashions, as in imperial Berlin and Vienna, the British Raj’s New Delhi, or Louis Napoleon’s Paris. Others persuade against the movement by resisting the whole idea of heaven on earth, directly or indirectly advocating the traditional beliefs of all great world religions, that “heaven” is simply not attainable in the time-space dimensions of this present world by any means whatsoever. The most obvious arts of persuasion are those dedicated to promoting the movement, either by attacking the “enemy” or by propagandizing the “model.” By necessity addressed to the broad masses of the people, their function is best carried out in more or less ephemeral media. Attacks on the “enemy” through satire or abuse of the existing Establishment, or through presentations of the existing world as corrupt and miserable, with the imputation that the “enemy” is responsible, are most effectively and characteristically done by means of prints. Images of blessings and freedoms to come, once the new order has arrived, most frequently appear in paintings. It is in persuasive arts propagandizing the “model” that new styles usually are developed — new sorts of forms appropriate to the theme and associated with the “model” being created in accordance with the principle that taste is determined by ideology.

Only after these arts of persuasion have done their work, will arts of conviction appear — those arts illustrating, embodying, or symbolizing the “objective” in solid permanent forms such as sculpture or architecture. Intimations of a new order may of course appear in such media earlier, but they must remain the private eccentricities of a few rich and “enlightened” individuals — avant-garde patrons, as they are known in our time — until the new ideals have been firmly established as the basis for society in general. And since the new style associated with these ideals is disseminated by persuasive arts, it follows that arts of conviction are for the most part created by a process of translating forms created in ephemeral persuasive media into architecture or sculpture. Arts of conviction may be either explicit (by virtue of their content) or implicit (by virtue of their style), or both.

To understand why styles in architecture changed from 1750 to the present, one

has to look at the preceding forms in paintings and prints; and to understand how those forms are originally invested with meaning, one has to look at the total social, economic, political, and religious upheaval going on throughout the last 250 years. This alteration of media and transference of meaning is the central theme of art history of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Let me demonstrate this process by means of a few, necessarily very select, examples.

<p>THE RESCINDERS, Paul Revere Print heading a rhymed pamphlet attacking seventeen members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, who, against the majority of 92 members, voted to rescind a resolution previously passed in deference to the wishes of George III on June 30, 1768. <i>Worcester Art Museum.</i></p>	<p>THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT, William Hogarth Print after the first painting of "The Rake's Progress" series, representing a sober and industrious London merchant settling the debts of a profligate lord in exchange for a marriage between his virtuous daughter and the lord's worthless son – a bargain that puts the title in the merchant's family but eventually ruins the girl. Begun about 1741; advertised 1743.</p>
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In the first, eighteenth-century, phase of the movement, we can see how prints developed their modern forms in response to the need for an instrument to attack the obstructive institution of hereditary monarchy and aristocracy and all its variants, like established churches and the mercantilist system; and to extol the virtues of capitalism – which was to be the prime instrument whereby a material basis for the new order would be provided once the old feudal restriction on commerce and industry had been abolished. In a print like Revere's *Rescinders*, that function is demonstrated in its most elementary and obvious form – to damn and denigrate supporters of hereditary monarchy, those Massachusetts legislators who dared support their legitimate sovereign's request to rescind a resolution, in defiance of the patriotic (or seditious revolutionary, depending on the point of view) party to which Revere belonged. Similarly, though more subtly, the function of works like Hogarth's *Rake's Progress* was to expose the corruption of hereditary class privilege, to imply that aristocratic vice and folly is what corrupts the bourgeoisie's natural virtue, and therefore to suggest that aristocracy must be abolished if the vision of a new order based on that virtue is to be realized.

To present images intimating what that new order would look like was the essential function of paintings like these by Greuze and Copley. For ideological

<p>THE VILLAGE BETROTHAL, J-B. Greuze Painted in 1761 and greatly admired by Diderot.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The Louvre.</i></p>	<p>PAUL REVERE, John Singleton Copley Painted about 1768 to 1770 and therefore contemporary with Revere's Rescinders.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.</i></p>
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reasons both artists made conscious contrasts with conventional baroque-rococo painting of their day. They discarded the formulae and aesthetic standards of aristocratic nobility, curtains and columns, generalized Renaissance proportions, and classical allusions in the manner of Rigaud or Boucher, Lely or Reynolds, Bridges or Smibert. Instead, their theme was the natural goodness of the virtuous and creative middle class, spontaneously and diversely expressing itself, untrammelled by artificial aristocratic conventions of behavior and representation. It was precisely because this function was so obvious in Greuze's paintings, because they so admirably represented the new Rousseauian man, that eighteenth-century *philosophes* like Diderot and Montesquieu ranked him among the greatest artists of all time — their aesthetic taste being formed by their social, economic, and religious opinions, and Greuze being so unmistakably on what they considered the right side. Greuze later fell into critical disrepute for the same reason. Once fashionable intellectual opinion on the matter of bourgeois virtue and the ability of capitalism to create a heaven on earth began changing in nineteenth-century France, estimates of Greuze's aesthetic merits were revised accordingly downward, and by the twentieth century he was effectively forgotten. Conversely in America, where intellectual opinion on these matters did not change, images of bourgeois virtue like Copley's Revere have been continuously admired down to our own time.

John W. McCoubrey, in *The Arts in America, The Colonial Period* (1966), saw an eighteenth-century development toward "distinctively American habits of seeing . . . a matter-of-factness . . . evident in the frequent rejection of the most elaborate courtly formulae, culminating in . . . Copley," and he declared: "We have continued to cherish the chaste products of such a vision." I agree entirely with the symptoms, but would diagnose them differently. I do not believe this kind of painting appeared because by the time of Copley and Paul Revere, American climate or genes had engendered some special way of seeing, some indigeneous "taste." I think this "spare style . . . where the fat of the baroque had been burned away" was created and admired because it was most suited to the ideology that people like Copley and Revere were committed to. To represent Revere as the virtuous bourgeois, to imply his freedom from aristocratic convention by shirt-sleeved undress

and natural haircut and his republican convictions by natural pose and direct gaze, the baroque formula had to be abandoned; it was not a matter of taste, but a matter of necessity. Here as in all living art, social function dictated what forms were to be used and how they later developed; hence the “distinctively American habits of seeing” that appeared in the 1760s would persist as long, and only as long, as the social and political ideology that inspired and justified them. (Hence the change in Copley’s later art, produced in England.)

<p>OATH OF THE HORATII, J-L. David Painted about 1783 and exhibited in 1785, four years before the outbreak of the French Revolution. <i>The Toledo Museum of Art.</i></p>	<p>DEATH OF PAULUS AEMILIUS AT THE BATTLE OF CANNÆ, John Trumbull Painted by the young Trumbull in 1774, two years before the American Revolution. <i>Yale University Art Gallery.</i></p>
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Conventional art history commonly cites David’s Oath as the beginning of the “neoclassical period of taste.” What does this mean? Scenes from Roman republican history were nothing new to Western art. Rome had been held up as a model state by diverse social visionaries almost since its empire had collapsed – by Charlemagne, by Frederick II, by Cola da Rienzo, by Renaissance humanists and baroque potentates without number – and Roman art had accordingly been admired for all sorts of reasons and imitated in all sorts of ways for hundreds of years before David. What was “new” about David’s “neoclassicism” was its attempt at using only Roman forms, exactly as Romans might have used them, not so much to produce pictures *of* republican Rome as pictures that *were* republican and Roman. (For an analysis of how he did so, see my book *The Restless Art*, 1960.) A new sense of immediacy motivated them. To a dedicated revolutionary like David, it was imperative to create exact images of the Roman republic, because Rome was now no longer merely a nostalgic memory of “good government” or “greatness,” whose precepts or practices might be evoked in a generalized or idealized way to reform or modify existing institutions; it was the effective model of a new order that was going to replace the existing state of affairs entirely, as had happened already in America. In that new order, freed of obstructive feudal and hereditary institutions, men would behave altogether differently than they do now – selflessly, patriotically, nobly at all times. How can we be sure of this, be confident that the revolution would, or could in fact, produce such a transformation in human nature?

Because that is how men had behaved before, in the classical republics of antiquity – just look for instance, at the Horatii! So pictures like David's Oath functioned both to promote the new order and as proof that a new order was possible.

The Oath of the Horatii was far from being the first example of neoclassical painting, even in David's work. But it was by far the best, because by the time he painted it, David had come to understand completely and consciously the function of his painting and so was able to devise precisely the right forms for it. In other and earlier neoclassical pictures, artists had either partially misunderstood the function of their pictures, or used the wrong forms for them, or both. So for example, Greuze had hit very early upon neoclassicism – not surprisingly, but indeed in the context of this argument, predictably; but in a work like his Septimius Severus and Caracalla, Greuze made the mistake of casting his persuasive image negatively instead of positively, showing the baleful results of letting republics lapse into tyranny, instead of showing their beneficent workings, and so vitiated its effectiveness. American neoclassical painting, of which there was – again not surprisingly but predictably – a good deal in the 1760s and 70s, shows comparable confusions. Benjamin West's famous analogy between the Apollo Belvedere and Amerind warriors shows that he understood something of how classical art functioned to provide images of the new and naturally good man, and the central group of his 1768 Agrippina with the Ashes of Germanicus shows that he understood something of the consequent appropriateness of archaeologically correct Roman forms; but his choice of subject (aristocratic family loyalty and traditions) and his use of many other forms deriving from Reynolds's "Grand Manner," suggests that he neither fully understood nor fully accepted the ideological function of neoclassicism. Charles Willson Peale's choice of William Pitt as a model of Roman republican liberty (Pitt as a Roman Senator, 1768) is as naïve in conception as it is in execution. Trumbull's Caninae simply uses inappropriate forms for the function of his painting; one could excuse them on grounds of youth – after all, David at this period was using baroque forms for classical themes, too – except that Trumbull never did realize the appropriate "distinctively American habits of seeing." It is because David in the Oath understood exactly what he was doing, and used exactly the right forms, that we can categorically say that his paintings are superior to these others – an example, incidentally, of how by criticizing forms not in terms of subjective taste but in terms of fitness for social function, judgments about art can be made that are absolute and objective, that are properly "art historical."

So came the Revolutions – 1776 in America, 1789 in France. They transformed visionaries into pillars of a new Establishment, and at the same time made their arts of persuasion superfluous; what was now needed were arts of conviction to set forth the triumph of those principles on which the new institutions of society

<p>FIRST BANK OF THE UNITED STATES, PHILADELPHIA Usually ascribed to Samuel Blodgett of New Hampshire. Completed 1797.</p>	<p>THE BOURSE, PARIS Designed by Alexandre Brongniart. Begun 1808; completed 1814-1820.</p>
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rested. An artist like David, who fully understood the social function of his art, accordingly began to abandon neoclassical painting, first designing pageantry during the transition period (variously described in Carlyle’s *French Revolution*, D. L. Dowd’s *Pageant-Maker to the Revolution*, 1948, and James A. Leith’s *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799*, 1965), then in his capacity as artistic dictator for Napoleon, supervising the creation of large, permanent, three-dimensional architectural monuments – such as the Bourse, Arc de Triomphe, and the rest – which glorified the new regime, and of which his later huge naturalistic paintings are effectively a part (discussed in *The Restless Art*). Of course the same process went on in America somewhat earlier. That is why an artist like John Vanderlyn, who failed to realize that the new Establishment demanded neoclassical architecture but no longer needed neoclassical painting, found himself superfluous despite having received a gold medal for his Marius amidst the Ruins of Carthage in Paris, whereas a rank amateur like Samuel Blodgett, who did understand the situation, could get important architectural commissions such as the First Bank of the United States. This building was an almost incredibly amateur performance; even the account of its opening in the *Gazette of the United States* for December 23, 1797, is wrong in every major detail:

A truly Grecian edifice, composed of American white marble a Portico in its proportions nearly corresponding to the front of the celebrated Roman temple at Nismes when architecture was at its zenith in the Augustan age the first finished building of any consequence wherein true taste and knowledge has been displayed in this country the architect is an American, and was born in the state of Massachusetts.

But that did not matter; the important thing was to symbolize the convictions of the new American Establishment in appropriate forms. And in a sense it was altogether appropriate that amateurish arts of conviction like this should have been the sequel to and consummation of such amateurish arts of persuasion as Peale’s or Trumbull’s neoclassical paintings, just as it was appropriate that David’s polished paintings should have been transformed into the sophisticated monuments of Napoleonic Paris.

<p>SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES, PHILADELPHIA</p> <p>Designed in 1818 to the specifications of Nicholas Biddle as the first major Greek revival monument in the United States. He wanted a symbol of Liberty in the sense of freedom from government interference with business. Built 1819-1824.</p>	<p>LIBERTY BANK, QUEEN STREET, HONOLULU</p> <p>Completed 1966.</p>
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That so many principal monuments of the new Establishments in both America and France were banks and stock exchanges was no accident, of course. Capitalism had been the instrument that eighteenth-century visionaries had counted on to provide the material basis for their new order, the vehicle whereby untrammelled bourgeois virtue could at once ensure individual happiness and the welfare of society. (Voltaire in his *Lettres Philosophiques* urged readers to “enter the London stock exchange, that more respectable place than many a court; you will see the deputies of all nations gathered there for the service of mankind.” R. H. Tawney discusses this idolization of capitalism in the eighteenth century in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 1926, as does Jacob Vinet in *The Intellectual Foundations of Laissez-Faire*, 1965.)

For a century and a half American banks were almost without exception built in classical styles of one sort or another – if not in Greek or Roman proper, in classical Italianate, or Colonial; even in ostensibly “modern” materials and structure, an underlying classical imagery of columns and entablature was still perceptible. As late as the 1960s bank buildings remained such pre-eminent symbols of the “System” – the traditional American society as established by the Revolution – that radical mobs singled them out for attack. It was ironical, however, that this should have happened at the very moment when classical styles for bank buildings were beginning to be abandoned, thus suggesting a deep shift in the national American ethos, to which I shall refer later.

Looking at American art history in this way opens up all sorts of new interpretive vistas. One could make a long digression on how the Colonial revival of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for instance, marked the transformation of the United States from a socially radical to a socially conservative country, by European standards. But let us consider briefly a few implications for the history of American painting and sculpture. It was Alfred Frankenstein, I believe, who first

<p>CIDER MAKING, William Sidney Mount Painted 1840-1841. <i>The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Charles Allen Munn Bequest, 66.126.</i></p>	<p>FUR TRADERS DESCENDING THE MISSOURI, George Caleb Bingham Painted 1844-1845. <i>The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Morris K. Jesup Fund, 33.61.</i></p>
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pointed out that a central theme in mid-nineteenth-century painting, and especially in the work of William Sidney Mount and George Caleb Bingham, is the “American Adam” in a new Eden, a naturally good or paradisiacal man freed from the curse of work by the blessings of American social institutions. Obviously, the pictures they painted represent counterparts of the images of conviction created in the architecture we have just been considering – and they consciously intended them to be so. Bingham, for example, as E. P. Richardson observed in *Painting in America* (1956), “seems to have had, at a very early date in his career, the idea of becoming the painter of what he later described as ‘our social and political characteristics.’ ” But these paintings also have elements of persuasion, inasmuch as they involve images of natural men living a wholly natural life, entirely free of any vertically structured social obligations, an ideal that goes far beyond political democracy toward the heaven-on-earth movement’s third phase, the vision of social democracy; it is no accident that costumes like those on Bingham’s rivermen can be seen on any campus today, or that Bingham’s career was contemporary with Thoreau’s.

<p>NEGRO LIFE IN THE SOUTH, Eastman Johnson Under its popular title, “My Old Kentucky Home,” this picture made Johnson’s reputation when he painted it in 1859. <i>New-York Historical Society.</i></p>	<p>THE RETURN OF WILLIE GILLIS, Norman Rockwell Painted in 1945 as one of a series of <i>Saturday Evening Post</i> covers tracing the military career of a “typical American boy.”</p>
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Generally speaking, however, this third phase remained deep underground in the United States until recent times. The American Revolution was so successful that it seemed for several generations to have been all that would be required to realize heaven on earth. You get this impression very strongly from American mass, or low, arts. From the 1830s through the 1940s, the prints and pictures with the widest

popular appeal were consistently variants of the “paradisiacal image” – illustrations that embodied in one form or another the idea that Americans had somehow been freed from all “ills that flesh is heir to,” that in America failures and frustration need no longer be taken as part of the inevitable and universal lot of mankind; that happiness was not a hope but an expectation. So in the 1840s and 50s Bingham’s prints swept the country. A picture like Johnson’s *Negro Life in the South*, understood as an idyll of happy people who live without working in the American Eden and nicknamed after one of the innumerable “darkie songs” composed by white men and sung everywhere in white society with the same connotations, was still well known enough in 1945 that Norman Rockwell, whose admirers called him the best-loved American artist of all time, based episodes of the Willie Gillis saga upon it.

A MUTT & JEFF COMIC STRIP, of about 1909, from THE MUTT & JEFF CARTOON BOOK, the first published comic book, 1910.	STILL FROM A LAUREL & HARDY MOVIE, about 1930.
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This same image of innocents living a kind of charmed existence without work, skills, or brains also dominates the technological successors to easel and book illustration, comics and movies. You find it in the very earliest comics, like *Happy Hooligan* or *The Yellow Kid*; as the theme of *Mutt & Jeff*, the first mature and really widely popular comic strip; in *Krazy Kat*, the classic of the 1920s; in *L’il Abner*, in *Pogo*. It also dominates the movies – Charlie Chaplin (tramps are archetypal images of this sort), Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd. My *Unchanging Arts* (1970) documents these and many more.

CHART

Again, thanks to the success of the American Revolution, the second, or economic, phase of the heaven-on-earth movement was almost exclusively promoted in Europe. Indeed until after World War II, “socialism” was always considered to be something essentially “foreign” in America. The chief center of this second phase was in France, whose revolution had turned into the Napoleonic Empire and national disaster, and whose political democracy had therefore manifestly failed to

transform the human condition. The conclusion drawn from this disappointment was not that there was something wrong with the initial premise of man's natural goodness and the goal of creating heaven on earth; it was that not enough equality had been achieved, that political democracy was meaningless without economic democracy. Bourgeois democracy, the institution established by the first set of revolutions, became, along with capitalism, the institution especially hated by those working for a new set, the god that failed to bring in the new order for mankind.

<p>SIX MONTHS OF MARRIAGE, Honoré Daumier Lithograph from "Moeurs Conjugales," about 1844.</p>	<p>THE VISCOUNT AND HIS LADY AT HOME (Shortly after the Marriage), William Hogarth Print from the "Marriage à la Mode" series, about 1744.</p>
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Daumier's cartoons are very typical of the persuasive arts of this second phase. His target is of course the bourgeoisie; and it is striking to note how he uses the same kind of imagery against the bourgeois that Hogarth in the first phase of the movement had used against the aristocracy – degeneracy expressed in the print mentioned here, for instance, in terms of sexual inadequacy and failure to achieve meaningful personal relations. Later on, D. H. Lawrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* does the same thing in literature. Once you forget about forms and start thinking about function, extraordinary new parallels begin to appear in art history.

<p>CLASSICISTS VERSUS REALISTS, Honoré Daumier Lithograph based on David's Sabines, satirizing the "battle" between the defenders of the classical (idealist) tradition in painting (Ingres) and the defenders of the quasi-realism of the Barbizon school, who romanticized the peasantry (Millet). Done about 1855, approximately contemporary with Courbet's Pavilion of Realism.</p>	<p>THE THIRD-CLASS CARRIAGE, Honoré Daumier Painted in 1863, an idealization of the working classes. <i>The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 29.100.129.</i></p>
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Daumier, of course, had no use for the classical-idealist tradition, or for the

romantic realism of the Barbizons, which he considered a variant of it, since both were products of what he thought to be the worn-out imagery of a decadent bourgeois establishment. The so-called battle between their respective adherents is therefore a pointless foaming of aesthetic froth, as far as he was concerned. "Realism" for him meant representing the working classes. When he turned to painting, he created counterparts of Greuze's persuasive imagery of a century earlier, idealizations of the new man who will inherit the earth once the outworn institutions that oppress him have been done away with. Only in Daumier's case obstructive institutions meant the laws and conventions of that same bourgeoisie idolized by Greuze in the first phase of the heaven-on-earth movement. American painting offers nothing really comparable to this kind of imagery at all, because American painters had neither the social base nor the personal motivation for creating it. (Lillian B. Miller's *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (1966) admirably documents this point.)

<p>THE STONEBREAKERS, Gustave Courbet Painted in 1849, the same year as his Peasants of Flagey Returning from the Fair. In both pictures unnaturally stiff poses attracted critical and derisive contemporary comment. <i>Dresden Art Gallery.</i></p>	<p>POTOMOHUNKY BRIDGE, Mathew B. Brady As late as 1862, when Brady photographed this group of Union soliders, photographic plates were so slow that figures like the one in the foreground had to pose stiffly in a kneeling position.</p>
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For the same reason, nothing that happened in American painting was at all comparable to the development of avant-garde painting in France from Courbet on. For Courbet's initial motivation and central persuasive imagery was the same as Daumier's, and he began the movement toward what came to be called "modern painting" by inventing forms appropriate for that persuasive function. The source of these forms, from first to last, was photography.

That paintings like *The Stonebreakers* or *Peasants of Flagey* drew their principal forms from photography hardly needs to be more than pointed out; the resemblance between the stiff figures and the rigid poses required for early slow-emulsion photography is unmistakable. Were time and space available, I could go on and demonstrate how not merely early works like these, but all Courbet's later works, too, consciously and deliberately follow photography — every time improved techniques and processes produced a new photographic form, it duly appeared in Courbet's painting. I could trace this development right through modern

painting of the later nineteenth-century – show how Seurat imitated stop-action photography, how Cézanne used the stereoscopic image, how Picasso used multiple images. But much of this will be familiar to many, and in any event I have demonstrated it in detail in *The Unchanging Arts*. For purposes of the present argument, I want to make only two points.

<p>MULTIPLE IMAGES, Jules-Etienne Marey Photographic studies of a walking man published in <i>La Nature</i>, 1883.</p>	<p>NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE, Marcel Duchamp Painted in 1912, this was the most famous and controversial picture in the Armory Show of 1913, which effectively introduced French avant-garde painting to the United States. <i>Philadelphia Museum of Art.</i></p>
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The first concerns the so-called retreat from likeness into abstraction, allegedly characteristic of avant-garde painting. It has been said so often as to become dogma that avant-garde painters were repelled by photography, that sensitive spirits felt such a compulsion to escape from the banalities of photographic reproduction that they came to reject recognizable forms altogether as fundamentally irrelevant to “art.” But were avant-garde painters in fact repelled by photographic form? All evidence is to the contrary. For example, it is hardly to be questioned that Duchamp knew photographic studies like Marey’s Walking Man, or something like them, when he painted the Nude Descending; he was born in 1887, four years after Marey published his studies in *La Nature*. Nor can it be questioned that they were his inspiration; one glance at the two is enough. Comparisons like this – and there are others – demonstrate beyond argument that the supposed retreat from likeness in modern painting is a myth.

Modern painting did not retreat *away from* photography toward abstraction. It retreated *into* photography – that is, into the new abstract forms revealed by new photographic techniques, forms that had not before been seen by the human eye. Keep Marey’s work in mind, and then think of the comparison you find so often in conventional art history, between Duchamp’s Nude and The Golden Stair by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, of the late 1880s. You will see that, far from Burne-Jones being “photographically literal” and Duchamp “retreating from likeness into abstraction,” it is the other way round. Burne-Jones worked in the traditional manner of all historic artists, selecting and abstracting from natural forms to arrive at what he considered to be something more beautiful than can be found in nature. Duchamp took his forms from multiple-image speed photography.

The second point is that this dependence of avant-garde painting upon photography reveals something very significant about the relationship between applied science and the development of "modern art." Why should avant-garde painters have been so persistently and consistently attracted to photographic forms — even, if we believe some of them, without being aware of it? You cannot explain it in terms of the conventional account of "modern painting" evolving in response to a need for pure self-expression, a nonobjective search for forms charged with personal, psychic meaning. But if you recall the principle I defined earlier, that aesthetic preference for certain forms over others is dictated by political and economic associations, the reason becomes self-evident. For the facts are that with the single exception of Cézanne, every one of the seminal figures in "modern painting," from Courbet through the postimpressionists to Picasso, held what their age considered advanced social and political views — communist, socialist, anarchist, as Donald Drew Egbert has so convincingly demonstrated in *Social Radicalism and the Arts* (1970); that they conceived their art as an instrument in the service of a coming new social order, functioning sometimes to attack the bourgeois order, more often to create images in terms of the new vision that the new man in the new order would enjoy — whether effectively or not is beside the point (as an immediately persuasive art, Picasso's *Guernica* is not nearly as effective as David Low's anti-Franco cartoons of the same period, whatever their other respective merits may be); that in this second phase, the agency that was going to provide the material basis for the new order and succeed in distributing it equally to assure universal happiness, as capitalism had failed to do, was applied science; that of all the manifestations of nineteenth-century applied science, photography was the one most obviously pertinent to painting. Apply to these facts the principle that use determines taste, and it will be evident why photographic forms appealed to avant-garde painters from Courbet onward and why photographic forms appealed more and more powerfully the more technologically advanced they became. On the same principle we can understand, too, why Americans who lacked the ideological convictions of European avant-gardists were so fundamentally baffled when they met such forms at the Armory Show of 1913, and likewise why the founders of "modern architecture" were so irresistibly drawn to products and manifestations of applied science like iron and steel, glass and concrete, when in due course the vision of socialist utopia triumphed and in its turn became an Establishment demanding architectural embodiments of its convictions.

The first country to have a socialist utopia established by law was Russia, after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917; and, sure enough, the first architectural monuments proposed to proclaim its triumph were creations of "pure technology" — Tatlin's, Gabo's, later Le Corbusier's. But as we know, almost all of these

<p>SOCIALISM TRIUMPHANT, Walter Crane Poster from the 1890s. The triumphant “angel” of socialism of course derives from the Christian image, which in turn goes back to classical sources – a parallel to the process whereby Marx secularized the Christian version of heaven.</p>	<p>MONUMENT TO THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD, VOLGAGRAD This commemoration of the battle of 1942-1943 demonstrates how, when socialism was established, forms originating in ephemeral arts of persuasion were transformed into images of conviction in the heavier and more permanent media of sculpture and architecture.</p>
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remained only projects. The official architectural style of Stalin’s Russia, beginning with the temporary wooden version of Lenin’s Mausoleum in 1924 and its stone replacement of 1929, was an only faintly modernized variant of the imperial classical style of czarist Russia, which, in terms of symbolic imagery, was entirely appropriate – Stalin’s Russia not being the egalitarian paradise dreamed of by nineteenth-century visionaries, but only a thinly disguised variant of the czarist state. (Khrushchev’s memoirs suggest that Stalin once thought of calling himself Czar Joseph.) What kept the Soviet state functioning in the 1930s, and defeated the Nazis in World War II, was no mystic faith in socialism, but atavistic convictions about Mother Russia’s national destiny – and these are precisely the convictions proclaimed, however unintentionally, in official Soviet architecture. From the Moscow University building to the Stalingrad memorial, its forms were ever more closely drawn from nineteenth-century classical imagery.

<p>MODEL FACTORY, WERKBUND EXHIBITION, COLOGNE, 1914 Designed by Walter Gropius.</p>	<p>UNITED NATIONS BUILDING, NEW YORK Built 1948-1952 under Wallace Harrison, director of planning; preliminary designs made in 1947 by Le Corbusier on the basis of his “Cartesian skyscraper” of 1922.</p>
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In the West, where the socialist utopian vision originated, its architectural image was correspondingly purer, in the so-called International style. True, exponents of this style customarily talked as if their enthusiasm for “pure” creations of steel,

glass, and concrete was solely a matter of aesthetic taste. But in retrospect it is obvious that once again, the real reason for the appeal of such materials — none of them particularly attractive by any objective standards — was that they were so conspicuously associated with applied science, which was to have sustained the new order and ensured heaven on earth. (Barbara Lane's *Politics and Architecture in Germany, 1918-1945*, 1967, admirably documents this social function.)

Since pre-1914 Germany had the fastest-developing heavy industry and the most advanced welfare programs in Europe, it is no coincidence that the most striking and conscious presentiments of this new architecture appeared there. At the 1913 Baufach Exhibition in Leipzig, Bruno Taut exhibited his Monument to Iron, a twentieth-century Sainte-Chapelle, its shape reminiscent of a medieval reliquary and, in fact, symbolically functioning as a shrine to the new faith in heavy industry as redeemer of mankind. At the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne, Walter Gropius exhibited his Model Factory, a kind of cathedral for the soon-to-be-established working class, complete with towered façade, where the saved were meant to gather in sacramental labor under the coming new dispensation. (When Gropius took charge of his famous Bauhaus art school in 1919, he made a cathedral its emblem.)

In 1923 Gropius designed one of the most famous works of architecture of the 1920s, the glittering steel, glass, and concrete Bauhaus building at Dessau; and at the same time he drew almost identical plans for an (unbuilt) International Philosophical Academy. The coincidence is not fortuitous, nor was it merely a result of consistent aesthetic principles. Rather it expressed Gropius's conviction that the Bauhaus was not an "art school" at all in the old sense of a place where students went to *do* things like paint pictures, or design furniture, or study architecture, but a place where students went to *become* a particular kind of people, imbued with a new outlook, prepared to go out and transform the world according to the new vision. Students went to the Bauhaus, in fact, for much the same reasons as postulants in times past entered monasteries, less to *learn* than to *become* something; and just as medieval monasteries with their massive walls and rich ornament and clustered towers were images of the heavenly Jerusalem, so the Bauhaus imaged the new Jerusalem on earth, where applied science in the service of society would put an end to capitalist drabness and let men everywhere live always amidst shimmering glass, glinting steel, and glowing concrete. Such is precisely the image created by the United Nations Building in New York. In its grand monolithic simplicity, the U.N. Building is an image of the planned society, heaven achieved by committees, a standing rebuke to the untidy individualistic capitalistic architecture in the background, a proclamation of the triumph of socialist convictions without revolution in the guise of the welfare state. So, of course, were the model cities — New Towns, suburbs, World's Fairs.

<p>PLAN OF THE VILLE RADIEUSE (THE RADIANT CITY) Conceived by Le Corbusier about 1920-1925.</p>	<p>VIEW OF FARSTA Model "New Town" outside of Stockholm. Built about 1950-1955.</p>
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As early as 1901 Tony Garnier designed *Une Cité Industrielle* as an image of socialist convictions. According to Donald Drew Egbert in *Social Radicalism*:

Garnier . . . like Fourier and other utopians, believed in the fundamental goodness of man. When asked why there was no law court, police force, jail, or church in his industrial city, he replied that in the new society under socialist law there would be no need for churches, and that as capitalism would be suppressed, there would be no swindlers, thieves, or murderers.

Similarly, Norris Smith in "Millenary Folly: The Failure of an Eschatology," in *On Art & Architecture in the Modern World* (1970), has compared Le Corbusier's city plans of the 1920s to the apocalyptic visions of St. John – radiant heavens without smog, cemeteries, mental institutions, or hospitals, where happiness is ensured for ever and ever by the beneficent planner. By the late 1940s and 50s these dreams, or the more practicable parts of them anyway, were everywhere becoming realities. All over Europe you could see primly planned New Towns, like rebuilt Rotterdam or atomic-run Farsta, showplace of Sweden. All over America you could see their counterparts, the developer-built and mass-produced new suburbs of American cities, and the spanking new neon and plastic shopping centers that serviced them. And all over the world you could see that new order imaged in World's Fairs.

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR 1939	EXPO '67, MONTREAL
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Just as the realized vision of political equality and beneficent capitalism had its pilgrimage shrines in World's Fairs like the Great Exhibition of 1851 or the Columbian Exposition of 1893, so the realized vision of economic equality and beneficent applied science had its great expression in twentieth-century fairs like Chicago's in 1933, New York's in 1939 and in 1964, and a climax at Expo '67 in Montreal. There the awed faithful could wander through streets of pavilions extolling the wonderful world Economic Man had created for himself, and there they could see still greater marvels planned for the future, like Habitat '67, a huge block of

concrete cells, looking like a cross between Navaho cliff-dwellings and a comb constructed by crazed bees, where presumably the new men would live and move and have their being, "each in his narrow cell forever laid." And like its counterpart, avant-garde painting, this Western architecture of socialist conviction took its form from applied science. If you want to find the origins of the International style, you need go no further than the nineteenth century's great engineers and speculative builders of railways and bridges — men like Thomas Brassey (1805-1870), Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona, 1820-1914), and John Roebling (1806-1869). Precisely because they did build machines and used industrial techniques, they were distinguished from architects and called "master builders." That modern critics should have been so fond of calling Gropius, Mies, and Le Corbusier the "master builders of the twentieth century" is recognition, all the more apt because it is unconscious, of the origin of their aesthetics in political visions, economic aspirations, and convictions about the heaven that applied science and social planning were going to bring to earth (see chart).

So in the 1960s great societies, welfare states, new orders were all creating their splendid architectural images of realized conviction. But unkind fate! Like the Irishman whose horse died just when he had taught it to go indefinitely without food, so at the very moment of triumph, the whole enterprise came unglued. From the young — and especially the university students, who were supposed to be the prime beneficiaries of the new order — there came, not great works of imagination, new discoveries, free venturings into higher realms of thought and purpose, but roars of protest and general disaffection. To devout believers in the new order these reactions seemed incomprehensibly ungrateful; surely this rising generation had been given materially more than any other in history. Indeed so, but youth had not been given the one thing it had been led to expect. Whatever may be said about the new order, good or bad, one fact is apparent — it has not brought heaven to earth. There is still greed, ambition, disappointment, trouble. Nobody is happier in spirit than before; all still suffer "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Nor is there any more real equality; instead of lords and capitalists, bureaucrats now exercise "the proud man's contumely and the law's delay" — and with vastly greater "insolence of office." Individuals everywhere in 1970 are far less free than individuals were in 1870, and over large areas, liberty in the old sense has simply vanished from the earth.

This could be the time for some serious re-evaluation of the premises underlying Western thought, action, and politics for the past two hundred years. This could be the time to recall that man does not live by bread alone. This could be the time to reopen the question of whether man is in fact good by nature, and to remember that if he is not, all talk about transforming earth into heaven is mad. But nothing

like that has happened. Instead, history has begun to repeat itself. Not the goal, but the means is being shifted. Once again the old cry is raised: "More equality!" Complete equality this time. Abolish all vertical social structure, all subservience of one individual to another, all authority. There shall be no more governors and governed, for all shall participate in society equally. Give us social democracy, and we shall have heaven.

Now all the players change their numbers. Now the enemy is the bureaucratic state, which the old revolutionaries have so firmly established. Almost equally hated is applied science; hence the fanaticism of the attack on pollution, which is of course the result of so recklessly expending society's resources on industrial development to ensure that there would be enough to divide among everyone. Now the miraculous agent counted on to transform the world is applied psychology. To objections that human beings cannot escape their backgrounds, cannot love each other innocently and completely because they are fallen beings, creatures of history whether they will or not, the reply is: they shall be conditioned. They shall be put on a couch in some Ministry of Love, like Winston Smith in *1984*, and treated until they are well; that is, until they can love to the new visionaries' satisfaction. In the meantime, before these new visionaries have the powers of the state to enforce such conditioning, drugs will be a substitute; the proper states of mind for the new order can be achieved though LSD or mescaline or "speed" or whatever. And what is the central image of this phase — the image that corresponds to the Roman temple in the first and the scientific machine in the second? Obviously, a precivilized state, a Garden of Eden.

<p>SATAN WATCHING THE ENDEARMENTS OF ADAM AND EVE IN EDEN, William Blake Imaginative illustration to Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i>, of about 1805-1807.</p>	<p>TE ARII VAHINE (LA FEMME AUX MANGOS), Paul Gauguin Painted in 1896. <i>Museum of Modern Art, Moscow.</i></p>
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You can recognize that image already throughout the art and writings of William Blake. (No wonder he has become a great culture-hero of our times.) You find it pervading expressionist painting of the late 1890s — the works of Gauguin, Van Gogh, Klee, Nolde. There, of course, it represents no more than private conviction; in their own day such artists were recluses, spinning personal fancies and dreams into their bohemian lives and their introverted art. But by 1970 such images were private no longer. An avant-garde art Establishment (curious contradiction in terms!) had come into being during the 1960s, as, according to Donald Egbert in

Social Radicalism, was first pointed out in an article in *Vogue* for September 1963 by William C. Seitz, then associate curator of New York’s Museum of Modern Art. And in that Establishment, such imagery was orthodox. During this decade, too, almost every university acquired a staff of well-paid “art professors” who led their charges in paths of unstructured awareness of essential existence, teaching them to see the world through infant’s eyes. Every town of any size had its galleries, where, paradoxically, the remains of such personal creative experiences were sold at old-master prices. Every budget with any pretensions to culture contained subsidies for “encouraging creativity” – creativity being tacitly defined as untrammelled self-expression, distinct from scholarship, say, whose discipline made it “uncreative.”

CHAPEL AT BRASILIA Designed by Oscar Niemeyer.	PRIMITIVE ROUND HOUSES Wigwams, igloos, huts, and so forth.
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What was more significant, architecture began to manifest the same sort of imagery. By the mid-1960s International-style steel, glass, and concrete was becoming a middle-class shopping-center cliché. The fashionable mode was “new brutalism” and applied movements – existentialist in motivation, primitive in forms. Once recognized, this motivation and these primitive forms can be seen everywhere. You can see them unmistakably in Brasília, for example – that new city set down in an Eden-like jungle, with a sacred sanctuary area, a Sacred Grove, at its center, and within that Oscar Niemeyer’s chapel, formed like a gigantic version of the cone of pliable sticks that shaped the round houses of prehistoric ages and primitive cultures. From primeval round-house forms evolved the great domical architecture of historic civilizations (as E. Baldwin Smith has proved in *The Dome*, 1947). To them, the new architecture now returns.

NOTRE-DAME DU HAUT, RONCHAMP Designed by Le Corbusier about 1950-1954.	THIRD-MILLENNIUM DOLMEN
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Le Corbusier’s famous chapel at Ronchamp is an even more striking example. He being one of the twentieth-century’s most influential and articulate exponents of modern materials used with uncompromising directness, it is natural to suppose that this sculptural design must result from expressing the natural potentialities of

concrete – until you discover that concrete is by no means its only material. The building is in fact constructed of many materials, including ancient stonework, painstakingly and deliberately shaped into the form of a prehistoric dolmen – or alternatively, one of the houses in *Bedrock*, home of TV's *Flintstones* – for what can only, in the circumstances, be reasons of ideological association with primitivism.

<p>MEDICAL BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO</p> <p>Completed 1969 by the architects Govan, Kaminker, Langley, Keenleyside, Malick, Devonshire & Wilson, Associated with Somerville, McMurrich & Oxley.</p>	<p>COURTYARD OF THE MEDICAL BUILDING WITH PLASTIC SNOW PILES</p> <p>Invented by Ted Bieler.</p>
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Or again consider how much the Medical Building at the University of Toronto resembles a prehistoric cliff-dwelling. You enter it through a kind of tunnel or cave. Through this tunnel you come upon what look like the dirty piles of melting snow that disfigure Toronto streets from November through April, until you look more closely and discover them deliberately made of molded plastic and ingeniously provided with drainage holes, the whole set over a pavement wired to melt real snow away. What is the purpose of such an elaborate “conceit” (as our Renaissance ancestors would have called it)? Obviously, it in no sense expresses or relates to the kind of discipline and sophisticated research that the building was erected to accommodate. It results instead from architects beginning to acquire the kind of freedom that avant-garde painters have long enjoyed, the freedom to express private convictions about ultimate goals of society – or more precisely, to conform with current orthodox opinions in the avant-garde art Establishment. This does not as yet represent the official architecture of an existing political Establishment; it is more in the class of such buildings as David's pageant constructions during the French Revolution, Gropius's Bauhaus, or Le Corbusier's villas – presentiments of things to come. When universal love, imposed by conditioning to bring us all back to primeval social relations, becomes the law (contradiction in terms!) of the land, this is the sort of form architectural statements of its convictions will take – buildings like the Ministries of Truth, Love, and Peace, which Winston Smith looked out upon in 1984, which

towered vast and white above the grimy landscape . . . enormous pyramidal structures of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace . . . The

Ministry of Love had no windows at all. So completely did [the Ministries] dwarf the surrounding architecture that . . . you could see all four of them simultaneously . . . [Winston wondered] whether London had always been quite like this. Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with balks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions?

<p>ERDMAN DORMITORY, BRYN MAWR, PENNSYLVANIA, EXTERIOR Designed by Louis Kahn 1967.</p>	<p>ERDMAN DORMITORY, INTERIOR</p>
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Orwell imagined that in the new order ruled by the Ministry of Love, there would be two kinds of architecture: great primitive monolithic blocks of concrete for the rulers and miles of crazy patched-up dwellings, ruined by air raids, for the populace. That kind of residential architecture is now appearing, but without benefit of bombings. A building such as the Erdman Dormitory, for example, strikes the mind and eye by conscious intent, with the same directness as ruins. The objective is to treat materials so directly, to expose structure so nakedly, as to remove any possibility of forms being associated with the historic past. This is existentialist architecture, contrived to restrict feeling and experience to the immediate, tangible present, to keep people always and only aware of the present existence — “involved,” as the cliché goes. All earlier generations, since men first emerged from caves, would have called such a building “ugly” — harsh in materials, unpleasing in textures, rude and graceless in composition. But whether one “likes” this kind of architecture is not, of course, a matter of aesthetics. Taste here, as always, is a by-product of fundamental economic, political, and religious beliefs. Those who do not believe in heaven on earth and the perfectibility of man, or who specifically have no faith in man’s ability to return to primeval innocence, will not find such a building particularly attractive; those who do, will — irresistibly. Nor can there be any effective argument about it. To a true believer in human perfectibility, or even to someone who assumes it more or less unconsciously, these forms are self-evidently beautiful, because they are associated with what theologians would call his “fundamental ground of being.” The origins and rationale of the “new brutalism” can in fact be traced back to the very beginnings of the heaven-on-earth movement.

Similar origins and rationale can be demonstrated for every other style we have considered in this paper. The differences between the “new brutalism” and Jefferson’s neoclassical architecture, for example, are superficial, not fundamental. Both function as arts of conviction, making large permanent three-dimensional assertions

of faith in heaven on earth — telling history what to think. In both cases, taste was determined by ideological associations. If their outward forms differ, that is only because heaven on earth is now being conceived of in terms of a model more advanced than the one fashionable in Jefferson's time.

So we arrive back where we started — not by way of line-of-progress formal influences, but by an expanding chain of ideas. And that is the whole point I want to make. Arts and artifacts from the eighteenth, twentieth, or any other century cannot be understood in terms of particular forms alone. Nor is it enough merely to refer to their having a "historical background" or to set them in some "historical context." The history must come *first*.

Once see arts and artifacts as responses to social need, as products of social function, with forms determined by ideology, and a whole new approach to art history opens up. For then historic art will be seen not as a reflection of culture, not as an emanation of any "spirit of the time," but as the tools by which successive civilizations were shaped. Historic arts created the *Zeitgeist*, not the other way round. Once realize this, and art history becomes something far more significant than the mere assembling of chronological accounts of changing personal tastes, whose internal development can be analyzed but whose motivation must remain inexplicable.

No longer "history *of* art," it becomes "history *in* art" — a study of arts and artifacts seen as records of successive ideological movements through the ages, providing a unique key to the ultimate meaning of human life and historical experience.

